

JB N^o 60

SERMONS

ON 4475. de. 5.

Effectual Calling.

And other

Important Subjects,

Tending to Promote

PRACTICAL RELIGION.

Preached in *BRISTOL*,

By *STRICKLAND GOUGH*,

Minister of the Gospel there.

L O N D O N :

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TO THE
Lady Levet.

M A D A M,

I Have not the Vanity to think the following Discourses, which I now present to your Ladiship, are such as can perfectly recommend themselves to your discerning Judgment. But as they who excell in Sense, are usually Persons of the greatest Candour; so I encourage my self to depend upon your favourable Acceptance of what is sincerely intended, while the Imperfections you will so easily

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ly discern may lessen your Approbation.

The principal Matter of these Discourses is of the highest Importance: And were the Management equal to the Dignity of the Subject, I might then please my self with the Assurance of having agreeably entertain'd you, without offering any thing not so acceptable.

However, such as this Performance is, I presume to inscribe it to your Ladiship's Name, knowing that the Truths contain'd in it are your daily Delight and Entertainment. They are such as you feel and feed upon, such as sweeten all your Enjoyments, and afford you the best Supports under your heaviest Afflictions. For tho' God has bless'd your Ladiship with a plentiful Share of the Comforts of this Life; yet he has sometimes put
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the Cup of Affliction into your Hands. So he deals with every Child of his; and I doubt not but under that Character it is that he hath afflicted you, as in other Instances, so particularly in the late Removal of a Daughter so deservedly dear to you. And I appeal to your Ladship, whether that remarkable Calmness and Resignation with which you bore that heavy Stroke, were not principally owing to a Consideration of the Love of God, in calling you to his Kingdom and Glory. Had you (as the Generality of the World) been a Stranger to that important Privilege, how insupportable had your Affliction been! But how Easie now, when you can say, God has *effectually call'd* you, and so your greatest Disappointments are the Fruits of Divine Love, and shall work together for your Good!

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As the Truths I now offer to your Ladiship, have been your greatest Supports; so they are, by consequence, the principal Objects of your Esteem and Value. It is not the least bright Embellishment of your Virtue and Character, that you know how to lay the greatest Stress upon the weightiest Matters. You have as little Regard for the Fringes of Religion, as you have for the borrow'd Ornaments of a gaudy Attire, which is all the Beauty some Persons have to boast of. You do not place Religion in Ceremonies and disputed Notions or Phrases, nor in this or the other Denomination; but you follow the Apostle's Rule, in *letting your Moderation appear unto all*, by loving the Image of your Redeemer where-ever you can behold it.

But

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But I shall not pretend to draw your Ladiship's Character: tho' in what I have said, with much more which I could easily add, I am under no Apprehension of being suspected to flatter, by any who have the Honour to know you; nor need I, after you have been known in that high Station which you so well fill'd not many Years ago.

Give me Leave, *Madam*, to add further as to the ensuing Sermons, that they were found useful in the Delivery to many of my Hearers; and therefore, by the Concurrence of the Divine Spirit, I hope, may prove so to others by this Publication. Those on the first Text, directly relate to the great Change which passes upon the Soul in its Effectual-Calling. The four following, on *John* 20. 17. and

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7 *Luke* 14. 22. describe some of the principal Encouragements of the Gospel, and were thought proper to engage Persons to endeavour after the forementioned Benefit. To them I have added two Discourses on Meditation, and another on Attending upon the Ordinances of Christ, which are the most proper Means of our *Effectual Calling*. And then I have subjoin'd a single Discourse, which was preach'd upon a peculiar, but very affecting Occasion; upon which Account, together with the Nature of the Argument handled in it, I thought it not improper in the Close, as a further Motive to comply with the General Design of the foregoing Discourses; which is, to promote Practical Christianity: and accordingly, whatever is Controversial is industriously avoided, unless where
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the Text and Subject did necessarily lead to it; and even there, I am far from imposing my Sense on any who differ from me.

I am not, *Madam*, insensible; how dangerous it is to appear thus in the World, in this critical, I might say, undermining and censorious Age: Nor do I imagine the Importunity of Friends, which has not been wanting on this Occasion, and was indeed the first Motive to this Publication, can be a sufficient Excuse or Security: And I am as fully convinc'd, that the World has a great variety of valuable and useful Writings in it already. But it is a no less evident than melancholy Truth, that Sinners who refuse to comply with the Call of God, do every-where abound; and that the best have need to be often
excited

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excited to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith they have been call'd. This must needs justify the Repetition of Practical Discourses: and if these may be instrumental of reducing but one Soul to God and it's Duty, I can easily bear, what I have been long taught to expect, *Evil Report* as well as *Good*.

That your Ladiship, with your worthy Consort and Family, may continue long to enjoy the Blessings both of the right and the left Hand, both those of the upper and the nether Spring; that you may go on to be an Ornament to that Religion which you profess, and to promote the Interest of that God who has promis'd never to leave you nor forsake you, and in whose Service you have hitherto found so much Refreshment; and
that

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that you may at last receive from
him your full Reward in a Better
World, is the hearty Pray'r of,

M A D A M,

*Your Ladiship's most Faithful
and obliged Servant,*

Strickland Gough.

T H E

The Doctor

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that you may at last receive
from your little friend in the
west is the happy day

M. A. D. A. M.

Tom Laddip's and
and his little friend

A. M. D. A. M.

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SERMON I.

2 TIMOTHY Ch. I. Ver. 9, 10.

Ver. 9. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling, not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began:*

Ver. 10. *But is now made manifest by the Appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished Death, and hath brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel.*

THE Apostle is here giving serious and seasonable Advice to *Timothy*, about his Carriage as a Minister of the Gospel. And two things there are which he presses upon him. 1. *To stir up the gift of God which was in him by putting on of his hands:* that is, that he should take care to exercise those spiritual Gifts which God had endued him with, *ver. 6.* by which it is commonly supposed the Apostle means those Talents of Knowledge, Utterance, &c. which

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made

made him an able Minister of the New Testament. But some think he means both these, and likewise the Gift of the Holy Ghost, which in those Times was given to others besides Ministers, by the Imposition of Hands. From whence I observe by the way, that the Gifts and Graces both of private Christians and Ministers of Christ should not be suffer'd to lie dormant in their Souls, but ought to be often drawn forth by the lively Exercise of them. 2. *Not to be ashamed of the Testimony of our Lord, nor of him his Prisoner, but to be a Partaker of the Afflictions of the Gospel, according to the Power of God, ver. 8.* that is, boldly to go on, owning and preaching the Gospel of Christ, whatever Opposition might lie in his way. From whence I also would observe, That much unreasonable Opposition may attend those who preach a Christ crucified to the World; but this ought not to make them ashamed either of one another, or of the Gospel which they are the Preachers of.

Now in order to set home both these Parts of his Advice and Counsel, the Apostle, in these Words, represents the Excellency of that Cause which he was to publish and to suffer for; that it was no other than the Declaration of God's eternal Purpose and Resolution to save Souls by his only begotten Son; *who hath saved us, and called us, &c.*

In which Words you may take notice of these four things. I. The Nature of that Blessing which God has bestow'd upon the Souls of Men in and through the Lord Jesus; *he hath saved*

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saved us, and call'd us with an holy calling. II. The Spring and Fountain which it proceeds from; not according to our Works; but according to his own Purpose and Grace. III. The eternal Resolution which God had thus to save and call us; which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began. IV. The Manifestation of this eternal Purpose or Resolution; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel.

First, The Nature of that Benefit which God hath bestow'd upon the Souls of Men in and through the Lord Jesus. He hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling; that is, he hath delivered us from Sin, and eternal Misery the Wages of it, and call'd us as one principal Part of, or one necessary Means in order to that Deliverance: for so his Saving us seems to be plac'd here as the End, and his Calling us as the Way to it. Or else Salvation may be understood as the general Benefit of a Gospel, and Calling as one of the principal Parts of it. Now in speaking to this, I shall consider these following Particulars, each of 'em as briefly as I can.

First, The Nature of God's calling Persons, in order to their Salvation; or of that Calling wherein so great a part of our Salvation lies.

Secondly, The Property of this Vocation mention'd by the Apostle here, *An holy Calling.*

Thirdly, The Connexion between God's Saving and Calling us.

First, The Nature of God's calling Persons in order to their Salvation, or of that Calling wherein their Salvation lies. By this you may easily perceive, that I do not mean that which the Scripture sometimes speaks of under the Notion of a Man's particular Calling, which God has appointed him to be employed about; so 1 Cor. 7. 20. *Let every Man abide in the same Calling wherein he was called.* Nor do I mean his calling some Persons to any eminent Office and Employment, as St. Paul tells us that he was called to be an Apostle, and separated to the Gospel of Christ, Rom. 1. 1. But I mean, in short, that which belongs to all and every Christian, relating to their Souls and the Salvation of 'em. Now the Nature of this I shall lay down in these four Considerations.

1. Wherever the Gospel of Christ comes, God does sincerely call those whom it is preached to, to Conversion and Salvation. This is that which we mean by an outward or external Call, viz. God's inviting Sinners to Repentance by the Offers of Pardon, and the other Benefits which such a Repentance would be attended with. Thus we are told that now God *commandeth all Men every where to repent*, Acts 17. 30. And so our Saviour describes him as sending forth his Servants to call them that were bidden to the Wedding, that is, into the Church, where they have a Feast of fat things provided for 'em; but many of 'em would not come; upon which he makes

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makes that melancholy Observation; that *Many are called, but few are chosen*, Matt. 22. 3, 14. It is the Gospel then which God does outwardly call us by. 'Tis true, *by the Law is the knowledge of sin*, and so far that may bear a part in the Call to Christ, as it shews us our miserable Estate without him. But 'tis attributed to the Gospel, as 'tis that which does most toward the perswading of us. See 2 Theff. 2. 14. *Whereunto be hath called you by our Gospel, to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus*. This is not a Call to this or that particular Sinner only, not to your or my Soul, excluding others that sit under the same Gospel; but 'tis universal to all that *Labour and are heavy-laden*, and to *whoever will, to come and drink of the waters of Life freely*. And it is as sincere as 'tis universal; for he delighteth not in the death of him that dieth; but Why will ye die? is the gracious Language that he calls poor sinners with, and Ye will not come unto me that ye may have Life, is the serious Lamentation that he makes over 'em.

2. As there is an External Call from the Gospel, so there is an Internal one from the Spirit of God working upon the Soul. Thus when the Sinner is followed with one serious Thought after another, when Light is darted into his Mind in spite of all his strivings to stifle it there, when Conscience is awaken'd into a strong Conviction of his Sin and undone Condition, when he has something within as it were telling him, this or that Threatning belongs to thee, the dreadful Character of

one that is dead and like to be damn'd for ever, belongs to thee ; what is this but the Spirit calling him to Repentance ? We are told that the *Spirit will not always strive with Man*, Gen. 6. 3. And what do's that intimate but that he frequently do's strive, which is the same with calling upon the Soul ? And we have an example of this in that Person whose Heart the Lord is said to open, *so that she attended to the Things which were spoke by Paul*, Acts 16. 14. that is, God not only call'd her by his Gospel preach'd, but by his Spirit at the same time, who taught her to obey it.

3. This Call of the Spirit within is absolutely necessary to render the outward Call of the Gospel effectual and successful. Alas ! thou hast great need to pray earnestly for the grace of God, when thou goest to read or hear the Gospel of Salvation. The loudest Calls that that can make, tho' the Minister may lift up his Voice like a Trumpet, yet will reach no further than thy Ears, unless that go along with them. The Arm of the Lord must be revealed, or else the report of a Christ and Salvation by him will never be thoroughly believed, *The Letter killeth, but 'tis the Spirit that giveth Life*, 2 Cor. 3. 6. *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy*, Rom. 9. 16. And many other places I could easily urge, to shew that Effectual-Calling is not the effect of a moral Perswasion only, the meer propounding the Object to be embrac'd, and the offering some convincing Arguments

to perswade us: No! no! 'tis of *his own Will* that he begets us by the word of Truth, James 1. 18. The Gospel is the word of Truth, and tho' there are the most powerful Arguments in the World in it, yet such is the hardness of thy Heart, that thou wilt never be call'd home by it, unless the Will, the free Grace of God goe along with it.

4. Then is the Soul called in a saving manner, when 'tis brought to comply with that method of Salvation which the Gospel proposes to it. What method you'll say, is that? Why, to repent of thy past Sins, to believe in the Lord Jesus, and that not by a naked assent to the truth of what the Scripture declares concerning him, but by a hearty embracing him for a Prince and a Saviour, giving thy self to him to be ruled, as well as to be saved by him. Let me tell thee, O Soul, if thou art not come thus far, thou art called, but alas! 'tis not an effectual Calling which thou hast past under; 'tis only a general and ineffectual one, which will never be enough to save thee. The Reason is very plain, none can be saved, if the Gospel be true, in any other way but this; and therefore that Calling which stops short of this, certainly leaves thee in an unsaveable Condition.

We are now in the next place to consider,

2. The property of this Vocation which the Apostle here mentions, when he styles it *an holy Calling*. Now here I might shew you that it is so in respect of the Author of it, as

it is a God that calls us. *As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of Conversation,* 1 Pet. i. 15. And it is so in respect of the Instrument of it, which is the Word of God, or the Gospel which commands us to be holy. But the main Reason why it is said to be a holy Calling seems to be, because holiness is the End and Design of it. Thus we are told that we are *called to be Saints,* Rom. i. 7. and that God *has not called us to Uncleanneſs, but unto Holineſs,* 1 Theſſ. 4. 7. And that this is the immediate end of it is plain, if you consider the parts of this Calling, or what it contains in it. For when the Soul is effectually called, these things are very remarkable in it:

1. That it is then thoroughly convinced of the horrid Malignity of all Sin. This is one of the first Steps towards Holiness in any Person, when he is brought to behold Sin, not thro' the false glass of a corrupted Imagination, which often makes it look charming and delightful, but thro' the glass of the Law of God, which shews it to be the greatest Evil in the World; that it is the abominable thing which the Lord hateth, and that 'tis Death to every one that commits and goes on in it. Till I come to have such a view of Iniquity, I shall love it even above my God, and my own Soul. But here's that which will go a vast way to make me hate and forsake it, when I am thoroughly convinced how vile it has made me in the sight of God, how impossible it is that he should love me while

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I continue in it, and how certain my Damnation is, if I do not forsake it. Now thus the Sinner is thoroughly convinced, when he is effectually called. For so they in the *Acts* were *prickt in their hearts, and began to cry, Men and Brethren what shall we do?* Chap. 2. 37. and so was the Jaylor too when he came trembling, and askt the Apostles, *what shall I do to be saved?* *Acts* 16. 30. And thus it will be with you also, if you are effectually called. I own there are many degrees of this Conviction, and some have more terrible Apprehensions about the Evil of Sin than others, and are more confounded with the sight of it; but we shall see so much of the guilt of it, so much of the wrath of God due to us upon the account of it, as will make us hate and forsake it. It is said of the Spirit, that *he shall convince the World of Sin,* John 16. 8.

2. That it is enlighten'd so, as to see both the Excellency and Necessity of that Holiness which is enjoyn'd by the Gospel. 'Tis not only convinc'd of Sin, but of Holiness as to the positive part of it. Thus the Spirit is to *convince the World of Righteousness,* as well as of Sin. And when the Gospel Call comes in the power of it, it opens the Eyes, and *turns us from Darknes into marvellous Light,* *Acts* 26. 18. And what does this Illumination discover, but among other things, the beauty of Holiness towards God, that the Law is holy, just, and good, and the absolute need of it, or that without it no Man shall see the Lord. So that the Soul when effectually called, is in the

the ready way to be holy. It sees that that alone can make it lovely, and to be delighted in, and that nothing in the World can save it, till 'tis restored to the Image of the blessed God. It does not now laugh at Religion as meer Preciseness, and call it a needless Singularity; but it prizes it as that which alone can render it's Temper pleasing to God, and it's State safe as to another World.

3. That it is brought not only to see the comeliness and necessity of the ways of Holiness, but heartily to embrace 'em. For so you must know in the Effectual-Calling there is a change wrought not only upon the Mind, but the Will of a Sinner at the same time. And therefore he is said to be turn'd not only from Darkness unto Light, but *from the power of Satan unto God*, Acts 26. 18. And so we frequently read that such a Person is come to be a *new Creature*, and to have a *new Heart*, and a *right Spirit created* in him. For what is it to be effectually called, but to be thoroughly perswaded? And a Man is not thoroughly perswaded, till his very Heart and Soul is brought over; not while he is meerly convinced, not till he is engaged actually to set about that which he is perswaded of. And so if thou art thus called and perswaded, thou wilt with full consent embrace his Righteous Judgments, I mean with a prevalent one, tho' there may be some Reluctancy mixed with it.

4. That in consequence of all this, it is engag'd to the daily Practice of Holiness, as well as to the Choice of it. Indeed if the choice

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choice be hearty, and from the Soul, it must issue in this. That is not from the Heart which does not issue in Application. And therefore thou wilt *follow after Holiness*, as the Expression is, pursue it in thy Conversation, seek after it as a Treasure, which thou art intent upon; and thou wilt be able to say as the Psalmist did, *I have kept the way of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God*, Psalm 18. 21. Sanctification, however it may differ in the nicer import of it from Vocation, is always the Consequence, always the Companion of it. And therefore we are said to be *chosen according to the Foreknowledge of God the Father, thro' Sanctification of the Spirit unto Obedience*, 1 Pet. 1. 2. and we are told that the same Persons are *predestinated and called by God*; and they are *predestinated to be conform'd to the Image of his Son*, Rom. 8. 29, 30.

The next thing to be consider'd is,

3. The connection between God's saving and calling us with this Holy Calling. Thus he is said to have *sav'd us, and call'd us with an holy calling*, intimating that the latter is a part of, or a means in order to the former. How to clear this, I will only mention these four things.

1. When we are thus called we are sav'd, because we are deliver'd from Sin as to it's power over us? What is Salvation, but a Deliverance? And what is it that we are deliver'd from, but from Sin, the most dreadful Enemy we have? *His Name shall be called Je-*
sus,

sus, for he shall save his People from their Sins, Matt. i. 21. This is a greater Happiness than we are aware of. There is an inward Torment, that naturally goes along with violent Corruptions, raging Passions, and head-strong Lusts. And therefore well may the Scripture say, that such a Soul is in a State of Bondage. So that to be deliver'd from Sin, is to be sav'd from Misery and Slavery, and that of the worst sort too, as it is a Spiritual one that lies in a Man's own Soul. This is the case of those who are called with this Holy Calling. They are got out of the Fetters that had robb'd them of their Freedom, and consequently of their Peace along with it. So we are said to be *call'd unto Liberty*, Gal. 5. 13. And, in short, if Grace is the beginning of Glory, if Holiness is the Seed and Embryo of Happiness, and part of Heaven in this World, then the called Soul must be a saved one.

2. When we are thus called, we are also sav'd, because we are deliver'd from Sin, as to the Guilt and Punishment of it. I mean that which relates to the Wrath of God, and obliges us to eternal Condemnation. We may be liable to many a Suffering for Sin in this World; and if God loves us, he will visit our Iniquities with a Rod. Thou shalt often feel how bitter a thing it is to sin against him. But here's thy Comfort, O called Soul, his Loving-kindness will he never take away. Thy Sufferings shall not be the Fore-runners of Everlasting Torments, as they are

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are to the uncalled Sinner. Has Christ called thee to Repentance, and has that Call been successful upon thy Heart? No Word in the whole Gospel is truer than this, that *thy Sins are forgiven*. For so every repenting Sinner may say, My Sins shall not be remembered against me another Day. Now this is a great part of Salvation; for, what is it for a Soul to be saved, but to be delivered from the Wrath to come? And therefore Pardon of Sin is describ'd as a part of our Salvation by Christ; *He is a Prince and a Saviour to give Repentance unto Israel and Remission of Sins, Acts 5. 31.* And it is a certain Ingredient in the Blessedness, that is, in the Salvation of a Gospel: for, *Blessed is the Man whose Transgressions are forgiven, and whose Sins are covered; blessed is he to whom the Lord imputeth not Iniquity, and in whose Spirit there is no guile, Psal. 32. 1, 2.*

3. When we are thus called with an Holy Calling, we are restored to spiritual Communion with the blessed God. One of the worst parts of our Misery by Sin is, that it thrusts us out of Communion with God. O! the deplorable Distance that it makes between him and his Creatures. They are Strangers to him with whom they should have been intimately acquainted, and in Communion with whom their highest Blessedness does consist. When this Communion is once restored, that's the Moment your Happiness begins; from that Instant may you date your very Life and Blessedness. 'Twas all but the Shadow, the meer Image of a Life that thou had'st before.

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'Tis Heaven to have but a little of this Communion; and 'tis Hell to be depriv'd of it. Now this is the Privilege of the called Christian; *God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the Fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, 1 Cor. 1. 9.* Ask such a one, who he daily converses with? and he'll tell you, *Truly my Fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* He converses with the World, but 'tis with a jealous Eye and Heart. He's afraid to be too intimate with it, lest it should betray him. But he converses with God by Faith and Prayer as his Friend, to whom he can unbosom all his Secrets, pour out all his Complaints, make him acquainted with all his Ways, and fetch from him Wisdom, Comfort, and Grace, to help him in the time of Need. Surely such a Person has Heaven and Salvation already begun in him; for he is saved from his former Distance and Estrangement from God.

4. When we are called with this holy effectual Calling, we are called in order to be perfectly saved hereafter: For that's the End we are called for. 'Tis the Design of this great Work upon the Soul, to form it for compleat Salvation; *for Glory, Honour, and Immortality; that ye may know what is the hope of his Calling, and what the riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints, Ephes. 1. 18. The God of all Grace has call'd us to his eternal Kingdom and Glory, 1 Pet. 5. 10. 1 Thess. 2. 12.* He has call'd us to his Glory, that he may be glorified by and in us; and he has call'd us to his
 Glory,

Glory, that we may behold, possess, and partake of it in his eternal Kingdom. So that here is Salvation begun in those that are called internally and effectually, nay here is a compleat Salvation which they are fashioned and prepared for; and therefore well may it be said here, that he saved us when he called us.

I'll conclude with two Inferences, at present, from this Head.

1. Let us strive to make our Calling and Election sure. This I speak to those that are called outwardly by the Gospel, as every Soul here has been this Day, though they may not be called inwardly and effectually. O make thy internal Calling sure by complying with the external one. Better had it been for thee that thou hadst never been called at all, if thou dost not do this. And this I speak also to those who may be effectually called already, but are not sure of it. 'Tis a Mercy worth striving for, to make sure of our Call to God's eternal Kingdom and Glory. All the outward Calls of the Gospel will then be as the Voice of the Charmer, pleasant and delightful; then when you shall know that it does not call you in vain, but that you are call'd and sav'd at the same time. Make sure therefore of this by comparing your Temper and Life with the Gospel-Rule, and seeing how the Call without is ecchoed and answered by that.

2. Bless God if ever you have been thus called by his Spirit as well as Gospel. Certainly 'tis matter of peculiar Thankfulness.

For

For 'tis not the Privilege of every Person; *Many are called, but few are chosen*: nay, 'tis the greatest Matter of Thankfulness that you can have in the whole World; for if you are thus called, you are saved too: nay, this very thing is part of your Salvation. When God spoke the almighty Word that called you out of Darkness into marvellous Light, and from the Power of Satan unto himself, he did as it were say, That Soul I now mark out for my Kingdom and Glory, and fix upon it for one that I'll save from Sin and Hell, and bring to full Salvation in another World. And shall not this make me admire the free Grace of God, make me cry Hosanna to God in the highest? Be thankful therefore to the Father, who is the Spring and Fountain of this Mercy; be thankful to the Son, by whom he does thus call you; and be thankful to the Spirit, who sets it home upon your Spirit. Let your Thankfulness appear by your Carriage towards the Father, Son, and Spirit; and that it will do if you take the Apostle's Advice and Counsel, to walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith you are called, by being holy as he that has called you is holy, considering that he hath not called you unto Unclean-ness, but unto Holiness.

SERMON II.

2 TIM. I. 9, 10.

Ver. 9. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling; not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began:*

Ver. 10. *But is now made manifest by the Appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolish'd Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel.*

HAVING spoken to the first thing I propounded from these Words, *viz.* The Nature of our Calling into a state of Salvation; I proceed now to the second: *viz.*

The Spring and Fountain which the Benefit of our Effectual-Calling and Salvation proceeds from, *Not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace: that is, It*
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was not any foregoing Actions of our own which mov'd God thus to call us into a state of Salvation, but he did it because he would do it, only from his own gracious Purpose and Resolution.

Now in speaking to this, I shall endeavour at the same time to prove it, and to shew you how it is to be understood. And to this End I shall only lay down these four Things.

1. As to the Truth of it, The Scripture is very plain, that those who are thus called are obliged only to the Grace of God for it. Thus we are told, that our Salvation in general is of Grace : *By Grace ye are saved, through Faith; and that not of your selves, it is the Gift of God,* Ephes. 2. 8. And as Salvation in general, so this particular Part of it, even our spiritual Vocation, is said to be of Grace. This, I have shewn you, consists partly in God's calling us by the Gospel, and partly in his rendering that Call effectual by his Spirit; and both these are described to be the Effect of the Grace of God. His calling us by his Gospel is so; *I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest unto them that ask'd not after me,* Rom. 10. 20. Many of those Nations who had the Offers of Salvation made to 'em, were so far from deserving, that they never so much as ask'd or sought after them; and then certainly it was not according to their Works, but according to his own Grace, that they were Partakers of it. And whoever will consult the Apostle where he de-

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scribes the State of those who were converted by the Gospel, will easily perceive that many of 'em were in the most degenerate Condition at the very time when it was first preach'd to 'em. So that God did not work upon those only who were best prepared for it, but upon such as were as far off from the Kingdom of God as any. As to our Effectual-Calling by his Spirit, this is owing to Grace also. See *Philip. 1. 29.* where we are told, that it is given to some Persons *to believe as well as to suffer for the sake of Christ.* And *Philip. 2. 13.* *It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.* And, in a word, the Instances of this Effectual-Calling are many of 'em plain Evidences of this: when such as *Manasseh*, a vile Idolater, and a *Paul* that was the chief of Sinners, shall be converted, it cannot be from their own Works, but from the Purpose and the Grace of God.

2. It is no Argument that there is a partial Respect of Persons with God because he calls them not according to their Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace. The Apostle rejects this as a Thought to be abhorred by us, that there should be a Respect of Persons with God, *Rom. 2. 11.* By which he means his dealing with some worse than they deserve, when he deals in a more gracious manner with others. 'Tis true, he leaves some to perish in their Sins, and some that never sinned in so aggravated a manner as many others have done: but this is no partial

Treatment at all, because they have infinitely deserv'd it: and tho' he leaves them to perish in their Sins, yet there is a great deal of Grace and Kindness which he first shews e'en to them too. He gives them the Calls of his Gospel, wherein he certainly deals sincerely with 'em. Nay, How often, and how earnestly, does his Spirit strive with them before he does thus leave 'em? So that if they are not called and saved, 'tis owing to their Refusal of his offer'd Grace; 'tis because they *will not come unto Christ that they may have Life*, John 5. 40. and *their Destruction is of themselves*, Hosea 13. 9. If God therefore gives more of his Grace to some than he does to others, this is only a soveraign Act of Mercy towards them, and they ought to be full of thankful Admiration of it; but 'tis no Injustice to those whom he denies it to. And in this case God may justly ask that Question, *May I not do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good?* Mat. 20. 15.

3, Those who are savingly called by the Gospel, owe it not only to the Grace of God, but to the Purchase of Christ at the same time; and these are very consistent with one another. It cannot be denied but that they are obliged to the Purchase of a Redeemer. All the Mercies thou enjoyest were bought by that inestimable Price, even the Blood of Jesus; and especially all the Mercies belonging to thy Soul must be trac'd up to this as the Spring and Original of 'em. And among all these Mercies, none is more the Effect of
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that Purchase than this: Therefore we are told, that Christ *is made unto us* not only *Wisdom and Righteousness*, but *Sanctification and Redemption*, 1 Cor. 1. 30. And hence we are said to be *sanctified in the Name of the Lord Jesus*, 1 Cor. 6. 11. Now both these, I say, are very consistent with one another: For, 'tis to the Grace of God that we owe the very Purchase that was paid by this Redeemer. He is said *by the Grace of God to taste Death for every Man*, Heb. 2. 9. So that tho' the Spirit whereby we are saved and call'd is bought at the Hands of God, yet 'twas he himself that paid down the Price that bought it; and therefore all must be at last resolved into his Grace and Kindness.

4. This does not at all argue that our Endeavours after this Blessing are either unnecessary or unsuccessful: for 'tis in Conjunction with these that the Grace of God does generally love to work upon the Souls of Men. Whatever it may do if it pleases in some extraordinary Cases, this is the Rule it commonly goes by: for *to him that knocketh it shall be opened, and to him that bath*, that is, carefully improves the Grace he has already attain'd to, *more shall be given*, Matth. 7. 8. and 13. 12. And therefore though I am always to *wait for the Grace of God* according to some Scriptures, yet according to others, I am to *strive to enter in at the strait Gate, to work out my Salvation with Fear and Trembling, and to give Diligence to make my Calling and Election sure*. And this I may safely hope will

not be a Labour lost, since I have to do with a God who *delighteth not in the Death of a Sinner*, and who never said to the Seed of Jacob, *Seek ye my Face in vain*.

APPLICATION.

Hence I infer,

1. That there is much Encouragement for those who find the Spirit of God beginning to work upon their Spirits. This Consideration, that we are call'd not according to our Works, but according to Free Grace, is a mighty Encouragement. Were it according to thy Works, alas! they never would deserve any thing unless it were to be forsaken by God; and instead of being called and saved, to be first deserted, and then damn'd for ever. Were he to call Persons by their Works in this sense — no Man would ever have been call'd at all. But now it is Free-Grace that we are called by; and this Grace is so free, that it can display it self upon the vilest of Sinners: for, *as the Wind bloweth where it listeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit*, John 3. 8. Apply this Consideration, O awaken'd Sinner! 'Tis a very comfortable Doctrine, and will help to keep thee from sinking under the Fears of Damnation, which thou art troubled with.

2. Learn to make use of this Argument in your Supplications at the Throne of Grace. It is certainly one of the most prevailing Arguments we can use in Prayer, to plead the
Mercy,

Mercy, the Goodness, the Grace of God: for he loves to exalt the Glory of this Attribute above most others. And besides, nothing does become a sinful Creature more than Dependence upon meer Grace, and a deep sense of his Want of it. When he's laid low under a sense of his lost Condition without it, and is ready to confess his Unworthiness of the least Mercy, so that his Grace must do every thing for him; this is that which God takes a special Delight in. And therefore this Argument is frequently used by good Men, *O Lord deliver my Soul, and save me for thy Mercy's sake, Psal. 6. 4. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy Mercy's sake, Psal. 44. 26. According to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy Goodness sake, O Lord, Psal. 25. 7.* Plead therefore after this manner with thy God, O Soul; Lord, thy Grace is the Spring of thy Actions towards me, that Grace speaks Freeness in the Nature of it: this is that which thou wilt peculiarly honour in the Salvation of a lost World; Lord, honour it upon me: thou delightest to glorifie it upon precious Souls, Lord glorifie it upon mine. And so for any particular Mercy, as Pardon, Comfort, Assistance, Support, outward Supplies, &c. one of the best Arguments to urge for 'em is, that God is ready as well as able to give 'em.

3. This should render the effects of God's Love and Favour exceeding valuable in our Thoughts. They ought to be so, because they are free, because they are the effects of nothing but Love and Grace. This is that

which renders any benefit much more valuable than otherwise it would be. The more free such a Kindness is, the greater is the Kindness of it. This is one mighty Defect in the Friendship of this World, and shews the Vanity of it; how foolish it is to take so much pains for it as many do, and how little 'tis worth when we have it; that we must certainly pay dear for it. There are some Persons whose Friendship you can never attain to, but 'twill cost you your Liberty, if not your Religion along with it. You must be a Slave to their Lusts and Humours, and you must even flatter 'em in their Sins, if ever you get it, or keep it after you have got it. So that 'tis hard to be a Christian, but impossible to be a Free-man, while you resolve to have them for your thorough Friends. But how desirable is the Love of the gracious God! That's the freest and the most disinterested thing in the whole World. *He has mercy, because he will have mercy.* And this is so far from robbing us of any thing that's dear and desirable, that the only way to attain it, is to be as good as we can, and when once we have it, we shall be as happy as we can wish.

4. Adore the Free-grace of God, if ever you have been call'd and sav'd by it. Ah! why was you pluckt as a Brand out of the Burning? Snatch'd out of the very Jaws of Hell, when so many others are going on in their Drunkenness, their Swearing and Profaneness, their Neglect of God, and all seri-

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ous Religion? Why was you taken when the rest—perhaps—of your Family and Relations are left in their Sins? Alas! 'twas not because there was something in you to draw the Eye of the blessed God after you, more than any of them. No! you are call'd and sav'd by disinteressed Grace. And therefore how should you admire and adore it? But I proceed now to the third General observable in these words, and that is,

3. The eternal Resolution which God had thus to save and call us; *which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began.* That is, he determin'd thus to bring us into a state of Salvation from all Eternity, long before we had any Being in the World, nay, long before ever the World it self was. A late Commentator [Whitby] has another Explication of this Phrase; he tells us that *before the World began*, signifies, before any Age had passed, or at the beginning of the World, when God declar'd his Resolution to save Mankind in that Promise, *The Seed of the Woman shall break the Serpent's Head.* But I cannot think this amounts to the full meaning of the Expression in this place. I own the Apottle has an Expression in another place, which properly carries that Sense, Titus 1. 2. *In hope of Eternal Life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the World began,* *οὐδεὶς ᾤκνῶν ἀπαρτίαν*, the very words which are in my Text. But there he is speaking of a Promise thus to save us, which was first given before any Age had past;

past; whereas here he is speaking of a Purpose, a Resolution or Decree about it, which is quite a different thing, and must precede his Promise outwardly declared to Mankind. Now what I would say upon this Head, I will also lay down in these four things.

1. That the calling and saving a lost World, was eternally purposed and resolv'd upon by the blessed God. There can be no doubt about this, if we only allow that God is an Omniscient, Wise and Immutable Being. Certainly all this he must be, or else he is not a God, that is, a Being of infinite Perfection. Now if he is so, then there is nothing that he does, but he has some eternal Determination about it. Is he infinitely wise and knowing? Then he will do every thing by Council, *according to the Council of his own Will*, or in the most deliberate manner. Is he an unchangeable God? then whatever Purposes he had, must be from Everlasting; there can no new Resolutions enter into his Heart, because then there would be an alteration there. And this is a Truth which the Scripture is clear in: therefore we are told that *God has chosen us in Christ before the foundations of the World*, Eph. 1. 4.

2. By this Purpose or Resolution he determin'd to call some particular Persons in an effectual and saving manner. There is a general Decree which God has about the eternal Conditions of Men, namely, that he will save those

those who live and die in a state of Holiness, and eternally condemn those who do not. I own this to be a great Truth; and certainly 'tis the very Foundation of Religion, as to the practical part of it. But here seems further to be a certain Number of Souls whom God has everlastingly fixed upon to be Vessels of Mercy, and by calling them here, to make them Partakers of Salvation hereafter. Thus the Scripture plainly distinguishes between some that are elected and chosen to Salvation, and others that are not so. *Whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate, and whom he predestinated them he called, and whom he called them he justified, and whom he justified them he glorified, Rom. 8. 29, 30. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Rom. 8. 33.* And so we are often told, that many are called but few are chosen; that for the Elect's sake God will shorten the days of Persecution; and that at the last day he will send his Angels to gather together the Elect from the four Winds. Thus does the Purpose of Heaven about Mens Eternal States relate to particular Persons, such and such Souls whom he has fix'd upon in a peculiar manner. And this serves to a most excellent End and Purpose. The Son of God must not die, and rise, and intercede in vain, but must see the Travail of his Soul, and be satisfied. And this Method does certainly lay a most sure Foundation for it. If you ask me what we are to think of those who are not thus chosen by God? I answer, We are to think this, *Whoever believeth shall be saved, but whoever*

ever believeth not shall be damn'd. None are to fancy they are reprobated so as that no Endeavours they can use shall ever prosper. No! we are not to pry into the Decrees of God; to see whether we are elected or not: If we are not, we may be sure 'tis for our Sins. But let that be as it will, the Gospel is plain; that Soul is certainly safe that will but fly to a Redeemer, and obey him, let him be *Barbarian, Scythian, Bond, or Free.*

3. That those Persons whom he resolves to save he resolves to call in an effectual manner in order to that End. Here you have free Salvation, as the End which God aims at; and Calling, as the Means to that blessed Design; that is, God does not only choose us to Salvation because he foresees we shall be called, but he resolves to call us that we may be effectually saved. This is the Scripture-Account of this Matter. Ephes. 1. 4. *He hath chosen us before the Foundation of the World, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.* 2 Thess. 2. 13, 14. *God has chosen you to Salvation through Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth, whereunto he called you by our Gospel.* 1 Pet. 1. 2. *Elect according to the Foreknowledge of God the Father, through Sanctification of the Spirit, unto Obedience and sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ.* In a word, thy Faith is the Fruit of that eternal Love which God had for thy Soul. He lov'd thee before the Foundations of the World were laid, and that Love engaged him to place thee where thou should'st hear

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hear of a Christ dying to save Sinners. Nay, that Love engag'd him to open the Door of thy Heart, that so thou might'st let thy Redeemer enter whenever he knocks at it. O amazing Love! O blessed Argument of Affection, which will never leave thee till it has brought thee safe to Heaven!

4. Those who are thus chosen to be called and saved, are chosen in and through the Lord Jesus. Thus we are told here, that the Purpose or Grace was *given us in Christ Jesus before the World began*. God never determin'd to save us any other way than by his own beloved Son; but when he first set his Heart and his Love upon us, he gave us to Christ, that he might bring us to that place where we shall behold his Glory. And so in that quoted place, God is said to have chosen us *in him* before the Foundation of the World, Eph. i. 4. So that he will never be reconcil'd to my Soul, but only for the sake of a Saviour: He will never pardon me but for the sake of his own Son; and it is for his sake alone that he will let me in at last to the Abodes of Glory, where I shall eat and drink at that spiritual Feast which he has provided for me. The Reason of this is evident; we can never be sav'd by any Merit in us, therefore it must be by the Merit of some other: And who can that other be but the Son of God, in whom all the Fulness of Merit dwells?

i. How

1. How great is the Security which true Believers have, that it will certainly go well with them in another World? This should make us despise a frantick World which we now live in the midst of; for we are sure of a better in a very little while. A better, where there will be no Jealousies, no Reflections upon one another, no Undermining, Envy-ing, or Backbiting: where there will be no Complaints heard from the holy Believer any more, nor Tears falling from his Eyes any more for ever. Why do you lie down under the Pressures of a few light Afflictions, as if this was the only World that you are sure of? Where is thy Faith, nay, thy very Gratitude to a God who has chosen thee to be happy to Eternity it self? Did'st thou but think upon this, those Trifles which now torment thee, and make thee go hanging down thy Head from Day to Day, would appear fit for little but to be trampled on and despis'd. Think therefore of the Certainty of thy Salvation by virtue of the Purpose of God, and let that engage thee to tread Satan and all his Instruments under thy Feet.

2. Let us take heed of abusing this Doctrine. 'Tis a Truth which we may easily abuse: nay, I am afraid 'tis a Truth too commonly abus'd also. But surely there is no Reason to do so. One would think it should rather engage us to the greatest Care that we are Masters of. Certain I am it would do so, did we follow the Tendency of it. Nothing tends more
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than Kindness to lead us to Repentance, if we are ingenuous. And therefore our Ingenuity should keep us from abusing this Doctrine. That certainly is a wrong Inference which some have drawn from it, that if they are Elected they are sure to be Sav'd, let 'em live as they please; if they are not, they must be Damn'd, let 'em do what they can or will. But this is a great Mistake, because God has chosen us to Salvation through Sanctification: And therefore he that will live as he pleaseth in this World, will fall into a State which will never please him in the next.

3. How Astonishing is the Love which God bears to a true Believer? He had thee in his Heart before ever thou had'st a Being. Then were his Thoughts busied about thee, even before the Mountains were settled, before the Hills were brought forth, even from Everlasting, from the Beginning, or ever the Earth was. O how precious a Soul must that be which thus took up the Thoughts of God from Everlasting! How great must his Affection be towards it! Hence surely we may infer what the Prophet mentions, that though he may seem a little to frown upon a true Believer, yet 'tis great, nay 'tis everlasting Mercy that he carries towards him: *For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great Mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, Isa. 53. 7, 8.* In a word, this

this is valuable Kindness, because to be sure it must be the most constant. It cannot be as the Love of some Men is, a mighty Blaze and Protestation, that lasts only till their Interest changes, and then turns into Shiness, and perhaps into Persecution. No! he that lov'd you from Everlasting, is most likely to do so to Everlasting.

4. See hence what is the right way to attain Assurance of our Salvation. 'Tis to make sure of our Sanctification. They that are sanctified are the only Persons who can be sure they are elected. Look therefore over thy Accounts; view thy outward Conversation; view the Frame and the Thoughts of thy Spirit. Consider, in short, whether thou art called with a holy Effectual-Calling. Nothing but that can give you a well-grounded Assurance that you are Chosen so as to be Saved. If this blessed Work is once conspicuous upon the Soul, all certainly will be well in a little while; and therefore strive after it. Often consider whether it is or no.

And may the God of all Grace direct you both to the Acquisition and Discovery of it to your unspeakable Comfort in this World, and final Salvation in another.

SERMON

S E R M O N I I I .

2 T I M . I . 9 , 10 .

Ver. 9. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling, not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began:*

Ver. 10. *But is now made manifest by the Appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished Death, and hath brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel.*

I Come now to

IV. **T** H E Manifestation of God's eternal Purpose and Resolution of Saving and Calling us with an holy Calling. This we have contain'd in the whole 10th Verse, or last part of my Text; *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, &c.* That is, As God had a Resolution from all Eternity to recover a lost World, so this he has at last declared

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clared and openly discovered. If it be enquired how he has thus discovered it? The Answer is, By the Appearance of his own Son, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who came by His Appointment to be a Saviour to us. And here are these two things which he has done in order to this, or thus to bring about God's Design of Calling us to Salvation; viz. *He has abolished Death*, and *He has brought Life and Immortality to light*, &c. This is the Meaning of the last Part of these Words: and in speaking to it, I shall consider both those things which our Saviour is said here to have done in order to display God's eternal Resolution of Calling and Saving us. And,

1. I will begin with the former of these Things; viz. *That he hath abolished Death*. Now here we are to consider how Death is abolished by our Saviour. 'Tis plain that he has not totally delivered us from it. We are still liable to, and must shortly become a Prey to the King of Terrors. And if we must inevitably, nay universally lie down under the Stroke of Death, how is it abolish'd and destroyed by the Lord Jesus? Now to give you as clear a Notion as I can of this, I must desire you to take notice, that Death is taken in a twofold Sense: sometimes 'tis taken for the Death of the Soul only, which lies in its Unlikeness to and Separation from the blessed God; and sometimes it's taken for the Death of the Sinner as to his whole Man, which lies in the Separation of the Soul from the Body.

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When the Apostle tells us that Christ has abolished Death, we may understand it in a distinct Sense of both these. And

First, As to the Death of the Soul, this is abolished by the Lord Jesus in these following Respects.

1. As he has open'd a way for the Soul to be deliver'd from it whenever it will come up to the Terms of the Gospel. This I speak principally of the Death of the Soul which the Wicked fall under in another World, even the eternal Separation of it from the Fountain of Life. Now this is abolished so far, that every Sinner may escape it upon his coming to the Lord Jesus: for, *whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die*, John 11. 26. And thus he has abolished it by procuring a Pardon for our Sins which had expos'd us to it, by dying upon the Cross a Sacrifice for us that we might never fall under it, and by satisfying the Lawgiver who had denounced it against us.

2. As he has purchased Grace to deliver us from the Power of it in this World. This I refer to the Death of Sin; which lies upon the Soul in its unregenerate Condition, whereby it is alienated from the Life of God. Alas! the Image of the blessed God is the very Life of our Immortal Spirits. But this we have lost by Sin, and so are dead as the Scripture tells us, *Dead in Trespasses and Sins*, Eph. 2. 1. Now

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this Christ has abolished, as he has procured that whereby we may have it subdued in us; that Grace which, when we seek after and improve it, will be sufficient for us to get a Conquest and Victory over it. 'Tis true, many do still remain under the Power of this Death, notwithstanding that it is thus abolished: but that is because they will not apply the Remedy which Christ has provided for them: they won't make use of the gracious Methods he has appointed without 'em; or, they won't comply with the Workings of his Grace within 'em. He has abolish'd it, made way for its being so, but they won't suffer it to be so upon their own Souls.

3. As he does actually deliver every true Believer from the Power and Dominion of it. For so when you are converted unto God, the spiritual Death is deprived of that mighty Influence which once it had over you. So that you may then apply the Apostle's Promise, *Sin shall not have Dominion over you; for ye are not under the Law, but under Grace*, Rom. 6. 14. This is an Act of the Saviour Jesus Christ; for it is done by powerful Grace, and that Grace is his, both as to the Purchase and as to the Conveyance of it. And thus he does abolish Death, the spiritual Death which naturally reigns over a wicked World: He does not wholly destroy it as to its being in us till we come to die the natural Death also. But 'tis now abolish'd as to its Rule, Tyranny, and Dominion. The World and Devil may strive

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to enslave thee, but they cannot really do it; thou art a free Man from the moment thou comest to be a true Christian.

4. As he sets us perfectly free from it when we come into another World. For then it will be totally abolished as to its very Being and Existence, and as to any further Hurt it can do to the Soul. Thou art now complaining that the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, that thou hast many Wanderings in thy holy Duties, much Coldness in thy Love to Christ, that 'tis a dull and a hard Heart that thou carriest about thee: Why, all this will be over in a little while, and the very Cause of thy Complaining will cease for ever; for thou wilt be among *the Spirits of just Men made perfect*, Heb. 12. 23. nay, this Death will be abolished as to all further Hurt that it can possibly do thee; for, *He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second Death*, Rev. 2. 11. and *Over him the second Death can have no power*, chap. 20. 6. So that here will be a compleat Abolition of this great Enemy, there will be no Death in this sense, but all will be Life and Joy, and that for ever.

2. As to the Death of the Sinner, in his whole Man, as he is a Creature made up of a Body and a Soul; which Death consists in the Separation of the Soul and Body from each other: This also is abolished in these Respects following.

1. The Forerunners of it are sanctified to all that belong to the Lord Jesus: I mean all the Evils that have a Tendency to, and that may issue in the Death of a Believer. These are comprehended in the Notion of Death: *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,* Genes. 2. 17. Thou shalt be liable to Dying, Pains and Afflictions shall seize upon thee, and these, by sharp'ning and corrupting thy Blood, shall at last bring thee to the Grave. Now all these things, we are told, are ordered for the Advantage of every holy Soul: *All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose,* Rom. 8. 28. Ah! this is thy Privilege, O Christian, the Afflictions of thy Body shall be Health and Soundness to thy Mind. They will encrease the Misery of a wicked Man, but they'll make thee both a better Christian in this World, and a more glorious Saint in another. And thus Death is abolish'd in its Messengers, or those things which are sent before to give Warning of its Approach to us.

2. Death it self is robb'd of its Ability to ruin and destroy us. 'Tis true it does destroy the Union betwixt the two essential Parts of us, our Soul and Body; the Silver Cord that ty'd 'em to each other is cut by its sharp Sickle, which will speedily mow down the whole World. But we may say of this as our Saviour does of our other Enemies, — *Fear 'em not, for they can only kill the Body, but they cannot destroy the Soul,* Matt. 10. 28. So Death
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lays the frail Body prostrate upon the Ground, chill'd and pale, and void of all that Life that once gave it so much Briskness and Beauty : But then the Soul escapes out of its cold Hands, and gets no manner of Hurt by it. And the Reason of this is given by the Apostle when he cries out, *O Death, where is thy Sting!* 1 Cor. 15. 55. The Sting of it is that which made it so hurtful: but now the Sting is blunted, nay 'tis lost, so that you may well cry out, Where is it, or What is become of it? For what is the Sting of Death but Sin? And that is perfectly aton'd for by the Lord Jesus. This is to abolish Death; so the original Word *καταργησιν* denotes the taking away its Power and making it as if it were not at all, that is, no way fatal to those that are kill'd by it, which we must understand only of true Believers.

3. It's not only deprived of its Ability to destroy, but it is turn'd into a Blessing to us. That's a difficult Chapter for some of us to learn, and be heartily affected with. But it's certainly true, and we may hope in a little while to find it to be so, that that which was originally a Curse is turn'd into a Blessing to every good Man. This the Apostle intimates when he tells us, *All things are yours, whether Life or Death,* 1 Cor. 3. 21. How then, you'll say, is it a Punishment for the Sins of such a Person, as we are commonly told it is? Why it may be a Punishment and a Blessing at the same time. 'Tis a Punishment as 'tis the Fruit

of thy Fall, as it's the Fulfilment of the divine Threatning for that Fall, and as it is an Evil really destructive to thy Nature. But 'tis a Blessing as to the Consequences that attend it. Look to the World above, which Death will carry thy Soul to, and 'tis certainly a Blessing. There are none of the Saints that are got there but would tell thee, 'Tis well for us that we are dead, and the Day of our Death was better than the Day of our Birth. This would be the universal Cry of the incorporeal People of that upper World. Blessed be God that we are to breath no more in the infecting Air of the Earth we once dwelt in. And we also should quickly believe it, that Death is turn'd into a Blessing, if we did but know the Advantages we get by dying. What a vast number of Mischiefs art thou delivered from by this means? a mischievous Tempter, mischievous Pains and Disappointments, and above all, mischievous Corruptions. And how many are the positive Blessings thou gett'st by it? These are as many as there are Joys in Heaven for the Soul to partake of; as many as the Diamonds in the Crown of Righteousness which the Saints are to wear in the upper World.

4. It is abolished as to those slavish Fears which, were it not for a Christ, we should have been under upon the account of it. This, in the Nature of it, is a great Evil; and in the Consequences of it, to wicked Men, is the worst of Evils: And therefore no wonder if it

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it strikes an Awe when we come to think of it, nay makes us all our Life-time subject to Bondage. But now Christ has abolish'd these dreadful Apprehensions, not wholly taken away all Fears from every true Christian, but lessen'd 'em from what they would otherwise have been : so that now we need not be afraid of what this Adversary can do against us. And how he has done this, the Apostle tells us, *That through Death he might destroy him that had the Power of Death, and deliver them who through fear of Death were subject to Bondage, Hebr. 2. 14, 15.* He has so destroyed him that had the Power of Death, that he cannot destroy the Believer any longer ; that is, him who by drawing us into Sin, made us liable to Death. He has destroyed the Works of the Devil, and 'tis nothing but this Work of the Devil that makes Death so terrible as it is in the Effects of it.

5. It will be totally abolish'd another Day by a Resurrection from the Dead. This I need not prove here ; they that call it in question *do err not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God.* Now this will be a total Abolition or taking away of Death. I don't see any reason to doubt but that the Wicked will have their Bodies restored to 'em to share in the Punishment with their Souls : and perhaps in this Sense their Misery will be the greater for Christ's coming into the World, as the Happiness of Saints is. But all of 'em will be raised by him ; the one to a State of Glory greater

greater than that of an earthly Paradise; the other to a State of unspeakable Torment which will never end. As to the one Death is abolished in a most comfortable Sense indeed; they shall not die any more, but be as the Angels of God: *The Mortal shall put on Immortality, and the Corruptible shall put on Incorruption, and so Death shall be swallowed up in Victory, 1 Cor. 15. 53, 54.* As to the other, they will not die any more neither as once they did. But how glad would they be if they might be permitted to do so? nay, if their very Souls might be destroyed as well as their Bodies? For I cannot question but that Annihilation would be a Mercy, and better than such a miserable Being as they are to have; as our Lord seems to intimate when he tells us, *It had been good for such Persons if they had never been born, Matt. 26. 24.*

Thus then you see how Christ has abolish'd Death. But now there is one Difficulty which seems to attend this Doctrine, and therefore must be a little spoken to.

The Apostle tells us, that Christ has *abolish'd Death*: Is it not then unjust and unreasonable that Death should so universally reign over this World, and particularly over Believers, for whom he dy'd in a peculiar manner? How has he then made a full Atonement for their Sin? And how can God still exact a part of the Debt from us, when full Payment is already made?

To this I answer;

I. This

1. This is not unjust, because 'tis the Method which our dying Lord has Appointed and Consented to. 'Tis true, the Satisfaction which he made was a perfect one as to the Value of it, and enough to ransom not only this, but a thousand Worlds. But then as it was a voluntary Sacrifice which he paid, he might limit the Efficacy of it as he saw fit. And therefore if by his Consent in the Covenant of Redemption all Believers must die notwithstanding his own dying for 'em, this was no way unjust to him: his Agreement to and Approbation of it takes away all Injustice with Reference to him. But now, Christ did actually consent, that Believers should die as he did before 'em. For *in Adam all are to die, tho' in Christ all are to be made alive*, 1 Cor. 15. 22. They are *to depart in order to be with Christ, which is far better*. And *it is appointed for all once to die, but after that the Judgment*, Phil. 1. 23. Heb. 9. 27.

2. The Death of Believers does not properly make any Atonement to the Justice of an offended God. Alas! I cannot satisfy for one Sin by all that I can suffer in this World. Nay, if I could suffer all the Torments of Hell for a thousand Years, it could not do it. For what are the Sufferings of a poor finite Creature to the vast Demerit of Sin committed against an infinite God? No! no! 'Tis a Christ alone that makes the Atonement; and I am obliged to him for all the Satisfaction which inclines a God to pardon and accept me.

me. So that the Death of a Believer does no way derogate from the Merit of a Redeemer, but we are as truly oblig'd to him as if we were never to die at all.

3. The Death of Believers is a proper Instrument to promote Religion in their Souls. O how would the Thoughts of This deaden us to the World, which we must shortly leave, and our Places in it know us no more? Ah! how far should we be from taking Thought about these frail Bodies, which must in a few Years be laid in the dark Grave, and all their Strength and Beauty be turn'd into Rottenness and Corruption? How would this mortify thy Pride, and make thee learn a better Improvement of thy Time than in Pampering and Adorning a mouldering Carcass? How hateful should Sin be when we look into the Charnel-house and behold the Skulls and the Bones which that has strip'd of their Flesh, and turn'd into a loathsome Spectacle to all that take notice of 'em? *For Death is certainly the Wages of Sin*, Rom. 6. 23. How admirable is the Faith and Patience of a holy Soul when he can glorify a Redeemer tho' He slay him? And what an Opportunity does this give to the Exercise of these Graces, which are never so bright as when they have the greatest Difficulties to encounter with? Thus the Wages of Sin is a way to make us the more holy, and to turn even Sin out of our Souls. So that this is so far from being unreasonable, that 'tis one of the wisest Methods to keep

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keep up the Honour of God and Religion in the World.

4. The Death of Believers will be their greatest Gain and Advantage. *To me to live is Christ, and to die is Gain*, Philip. i. 21. We shall get more by Dying, than ever we lost by Sinning: That threw us out of an earthly Paradise, but This will translate us to the Garden of God above, where we shall eat of the Tree of Life, and shine with a brighter Glory than if we had never sinn'd. Now where is the Hurt done to a Believer, when he gains so much by the Agonies of a dying Hour? What if God makes a sharp and a painful Death the way to a Crown, will not that Crown make thee perfect Amends for it? So that thou hast no Reason to complain of, but rather to welcome the Messenger, tho' it be a ghastly one, that comes to call thee to thy Father's Kingdom.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

1. How dreadful is the Condition of every wicked Man in this World? Such a Person is a dead Man: He is dead spiritually already: He is almost dead temporally, hastning apace to it: And he will certainly die eternally if he does not speedily repent. Alas! Christ has abolished Death, but he has not done it for him, unless it be in a very general Sense; for he must feel the very Bitterness of Death notwithstanding. I would not be therefore in thy

thy Case for a thousand Worlds. If thine Eye was but open to see the Condition of thine own Soul, the Fears of Death would enslave thee, and make thee miserable all thy Days. But whether thou wilt see it or not, there is but a Thread that parts thee from eternal Mi-
fery, and that will speedily be cut asunder.

2. Let none who have any Reason to hope that they are true Christians, be much afraid of dying: *This last Enemy will be destroyed,* 1 Cor. 15. 26. He is an Enemy, but he is to be destroyed; and therefore there is no great Reason to be afraid of him. This Victory is sure, for Christ has abolish'd Death; that is, 'tis as sure that he will do it, as if he had actually done it already. I know we cannot ordinarily help being afraid of it; and our Lord himself was so, tho' he was without Sin. But cannot you reason your selves out of the slavish Fears of it? Certainly you may go a great way towards it. I am sure it is very unreasonable to dread that which is abolish'd and destroy'd, for then it cannot much hurt us. O for more of the Apostle's Temper, *to desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better!* 'Tis the most comfortable Frame we can arrive at.

3. Hence I infer, That whatever brings Death to a Believer, may be both an Enemy and a Friend at the same time. There are a thousand things in the World that may do this last Office for Believers. Sometimes they
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are kill'd by contracted Diseases, and sometimes by the Unkindness of their Friends and Relations. How many a froward Child has brought the Parents that gave him his very Being, with Sorrow to the Grave? Nay, the Undutifulness, the Obstinacy, and the Insults of those they might expect the greatest Affection from, bring more perhaps to the Grave than any one Distemper in the World besides. Now all this you look upon as your Enemy; and so it is to the Nature you carry about you. But 'tis really a Friend; the Grace and Kindness of God makes it to be so, because he has abolished the ill Consequences of Dying, and made it a Means of the greatest Good to the Soul.

4. How precious should a Christ be to us? and what Pains should we take to get an Interest in him? How precious should he be to your Soul and mine? how altogether lovely? For 'tis not in the Power of Men or Angels to destroy Death; none but Christ can do it. He has triumph'd over him already, conquer'd him in his own Dominions; nay, conquer'd even him that had the Power of Death: And he'll help thee to triumph over Death too. So that thou shalt say in a little while, *O Death, where is thy Sting! O Grave, where is thy Victory!* But how careful should we be to have this Jesus for our Saviour? There's no Victory over Death; no having it abolish'd for us but by him; and he'll never abolish it for those who are Strangers to him, who despise him, and
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will not have him to reign over them. Would'st thou not therefore have Death to reign over thee, let Christ do so; and that will certainly prevent it. Go to him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and he'll free thee from the spiritual Death now, from the eternal Death when thou comest to die, and from the Spiritual, Temporal, and Eternal, when the Morning of the Resurrection, and the Great-Day of the Lord shall come.

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SERMON IV.

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Ver. 9. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling; not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began:*

Ver. 10. *But is now made manifest by the Appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolish'd Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel.*

II. **I** Come now to the other thing which Christ is said here to have done in order to display and accomplish God's eternal Resolution of Calling and Saving Souls; *He hath brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel. Life and Immortality; that is, Immortal Life, or that Life which will never be subject to, nor never terminate in Death, as our Life in this World does. This*

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he has *brought to light by the Gospel*; that is, he has given greater Assurances of it to the World than ever it had before, scatter'd the Clouds that hinder'd the Souls of Men from looking into it; so that whereas before they saw it only as by the Twilight, in a most obscure manner, it is now become as clear as the Day to 'em. Now here I must desire you to observe, that this endless Life which we are speaking of, may be considered also under a twofold Notion: you may take it for that eternal Glory and Happiness which holy Souls are to partake of in another World; or you may take it for that Felicity which the Souls and Bodies of the Saints shall jointly enjoy at the Resurrection of the Just. And both these Christ has brought to light, or given us the fullest Assurance of by the Gospel. We will distinctly consider both the one and the other, and then apply it.

I. As to the Life of Glory and Blessedness which we are to enter upon at our going out of this World. This he has brought to light by the Gospel; assur'd us of a Heaven for holy Souls, even *Glory, Honour, and Immortality, and eternal Life*, and that much more fully than we should otherwise have been acquainted with it. Now for the Clearing and Proof of this, I will lay down these four following Things:

1. That the Church of God, before Christ came into this World, was not without many
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convincing Arguments of a Life of Happiness to be enjoyed after this is over. I own, the Promises which God gave to his People under the Law, were most of 'em temporal ones, and such as related to their Happiness in this World. But whoever is acquainted with the Old Testament, may easily observe, that both before and under the Law there were great Assurances given of far better Things to be enjoyed by Believers beyond Death and the Grave. Abel offer'd a more acceptable Sacrifice than Cain, and yet he was presently murder'd for it: But what signified the Acceptableness of his Sacrifice, if it only expos'd him to a violent Death, without any Recompence at all after it? Enoch, we are told, *was translated with this Testimony, that he pleased God*: But what Benefit could that be, if there were not a Heaven which he was translated to? If you look after the Flood to Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, God tells him, that *he would be his God, his Shield, and his exceeding great Reward*; yet we never find that this was fully made good to him in this World; no! but *he dwelt in Tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob the Heirs with him of the same Promise*, in a very unsettled Condition as to this World; and that made them *seek for a City which had Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God*, Heb. 11. 9, 10. They only saw the Promises afar off, and confessed that they were Pilgrims and Strangers upon the Earth, and thereby plainly declared that they sought a better Country, that is, an heavenly, ver. 13, 14. Nay, after this, when the Law was given by

Moses, which contain'd so many carnal Commandments and Promises, yet then did Believers often comfort themselves with the hopes of better Things which God had in reserve for their Souls. *Moses* himself chose to suffer Affliction with the People of God, because he had respect to the Recompence of Reward, Heb. 11. 26. And how full of Hopes was the Psalmist of this Life and Immortality, when he cry'd out, *Light is sown for the righteous, and Gladness for the upright in heart: In thy presence is Fullness of Joy, and at thy right-hand there are Pleasures for evermore*, Psal. 16. 11. And so under the Loss of his beloved Child, he comforts himself with this, which is the best Cordial that I know of for mourning Parents, *I shall go to him, tho' he shall not return to me*. I know we have sometimes such Expressions as these, *In the Grave there is no Remembrance of thee, Who shall give thee Thanks, and Shall the Dead arise and praise thee?* But these don't imply any Doubt of a future glorious Existence, but only declare the Advantage of the Living in this World, that they are most capable of vindicating the Truth and Goodness of God against their Opposers, and thereby awak'ning others to glorify their Father which is in Heaven. And thus I might go on to shew how the Faith of Believers, as to this eternal Life, grew stronger and more assured till Christ came and brought it to Light by the Gospel. *Solomon* evidently speaks of it, *The way of Life is above to the wise, that he may depart from Hell beneath*, Prov. 15. 24. And particularly of a Day of Judgment in order

order to it, God shall bring every Work into Judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or evil, Eccles. 12. 14. Daniel is more plain, that many shall awake out of the Dust, some to everlasting Life, and others to Shame and everlasting Contempt, Dan. 12. 2. And this was that which encouraged the Maccabees to suffer the Cruelties of that bitter Persecutor *Antiochus*, that tho' they dy'd for the Cause of God, yet they knew he would restore them to a more lasting Life in another World. In a word, the Offers of Pardon which they had, imply'd the Truth of this; nay, their very Sacrifices themselves, and the whole of that Dispensation, did obscurely denote it; for they had the shadow of good things to come. And, to add no more, our Lord refers the Jews to the Law and the Prophets for a Testimony of himself, upon this account, because they look'd upon them as the Charter which contain'd their Title to Heaven: *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me*, John 5. 39. Surely this was not so dark a Day to Believers, but that even then they could all die in Faith, as we are told several of 'em did, and go out of the World triumphing in this Hope, that he who had promis'd to be their God, and had actually been so all their Days in this World, would not forsake them when they were gone out of it.

2. That there is a natural Light in the Soul of Man which may direct him to some probable

bable Hopes of such a Life of Glory in another World. The Understanding of a Man is the Candle of the Lord: and by the Light of this Candle we may see into a Glory to be enjoy'd, tho' we can't do it so fully as by the Light of the Sun. If I had nothing to conjecture from but the Nature of a God, his Justice, Goodness, &c. I could not but think, *Verily there is a Reward for the Righteous.* If I only thought of the miserable Condition of many a godly Person in the World, that they are chasten'd every moment, and that the very Foxes and Birds of the Air are happier than they, who have not where to lay their Heads; I could never believe that this is the only Life they are appointed by God for. All this perhaps will not arise to a full Assurance; but this is some Evidence, and that as much as would make any considerate Soul afraid of falling short of, and willing to part with the most beloved Lusts to obtain this Glory. And this the Apostle seems to intimate in these words, *He that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him,* Heb. 11. 6. There is Light enough in the Souls of Men to tell 'em that there is a God, and that no Person shall ever serve him to his Cost, but that he'll make him perfect Amends for whatever he does for him: And upon this Encouragement, 'tis the Duty of every Person in the World to come unto God, or to worship him, love him, trust him, and obey him.

3. That accordingly those who never heard of the Gospel of Christ, had some probable Hopes and Expectations of such an eternal Life. I could easily prove this out of many of their Writings, both Historical and Philosophical. To this purpose is that Story of *Cleombrotus*, that when he read *Plato* of the Immortality of the Soul and another World, he was so ravish'd with the Thoughts of it, that he presently cast himself into the Sea, that he might go to enjoy it. *Socrates* was poison'd for defending the Unity of the Godhead, and before he dy'd discours'd very long and finely concerning the Immortality of Souls, as *Laertius* in his Life asserts. *Thales* was so remarkable for this Opinion, that the same Author tells us he was thought by some to be the Inventor of it. *Plato* wrote a Book of the Immortality of the Soul; and it were easie to name a thousand Instances to this purpose. I know there are some who tell us of whole Nations that were but lately without any Religion, or Belief of a God and another World; such as *Hispaniola*, *Brasil*, *Cuba*, and the *Caribbean Islands*: But those Accounts are contradicted by others who have made a particular Search into this matter: And I remember a remarkable Story I have read in a late Author * to this purpose; * *Stillington's*
When *Columbus* was at *Cuba*, one Orig. *Sacrae*.
of the Natives, a Heathen, came to him, and told him by an Interpreter, that he had disturb'd the Natives, and bid him consider, that after Death there were two

Passages for Souls, the one dark and dreadful, the other pleasant and delightful ; and if he consider'd that every Man was to receive according to his Actions, he would cease to trouble 'em as he had done. Upon this, says my Author, *Columbus* told him, he came only to assist 'em against the Savages and Cannibals, and would hurt none of them : Which the Old-man, as aged as he was, was so pleased with, that he offer'd to go with him upon so good a Design. But suppose these Nations really to disbelieve this immortal Life, they are but small inconsiderable Parts of the World, and own'd to be the most degenerate Parts, so that they can't deserve any great Regard.

4. That the Discoveries which Christ has made by the Gospel of this eternal Life, are much more satisfying and assuring than any of these are. The Matter is now out of doubt ; I am now as sure of it almost as if I were actually drinking of these Rivers of Pleasure ; nay, we have something of them too even in this World, in the Joys of the Holy-Ghost which Believers sometimes partake of here. What can you have more to convince you, than what your Redeemer has already given ? He came from the Bosom of the Father on purpose to assure us of it. He gave us many express Declarations of it when he was in this World ; *They shall be with me to behold my Glory, John 17. 24. I give unto them eternal Life, and they shall never perish, Joh. 10. 28.* When

When he was going out of the World, he tells us what he was going for; *In my Father's house there are many Mansions, I go to prepare a place for you, Joh. 14. 2.* Upon his Cross he paid down a Price whereby he purchas'd it of his Father. At last he visibly ascended far above all Heavens, and that in the very sight of the Apostles, that we might not doubt of this Truth. And how did he ascend up into Heaven? He ascended as the Head, the Forerunner, the Representative of our Persons. *Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, Heb. 6. 20.* And how often is this declared by the Holy-Ghost, who came in the room of our departed Lord? Has not he assur'd us in the Gospel, that *the gift of God is eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord; that now we see through a Glass darkly, but then face to face; that the time is coming when every Believer shall be like him, for he shall see him as he is; that we have a Building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens; and that our very Afflictions shall work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory?* Alas! this is Day-light indeed to the Case of the poor Israelites of old, the Church of God before the Coming of our Saviour; who therefore might well cry out to him, *Until the Day break, and the Shadows flee away; turn my beloved, and be thou like a Roe, or a young Hart upon the Mountains of Bether, Cant. 2. 17.* This is Noonday Brightness to the poor Heathen, who were at mighty Uncertainties after all about this necessary Doctrine. They hop'd there was such a Place as Heaven, but they had strange
Notions

Notions of the Nature of it, nay many of 'em would not believe it at all, and they were almost universally very doubtful whether there was such a Place or no. So that when a Man dy'd in this benighted State, he was like the distressed *Adrian*, who lamented, as he was just going to die, *his poor wandring Soul*, as he call'd it, saying, *Alas! Whither art thou going? Thou shalt now jest no more, thou shalt never be merry any more.* This is not the Case of a true Christian; he knows whither he is going when Death comes to carry him out of this World. He knows that his pleasant Days, as to this Life, are over; but he knows too, that his sinning and afflictive Days are over as well as they; and he knows that they are all ending in a Day of Glory, when he shall be vain and frothy no more, when he shall sin and sorrow no more for ever.

II. As to the Life of Happiness which the Souls and Bodies of Believers shall jointly partake of at the Morning of the Resurrection; This also is brought to light by the Gospel; and this seems to be peculiarly meant here by *Life and Immortality*: For the original Word *ἀφθαρσία*, which we render *Immortality*, properly denotes *Incorruption*, which relates to the Body that is to see Corruption in the Grave. Now to clear this, I need only just mention these four Things.

1. 'Tis plain, Life and Immortality, under this Notion, cannot be brought to Light but by

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by a Revelation ; because it wholly depends upon the Will of God, whether we shall thus live for ever or not. We may say therefore of this as it is said of our blessed Saviour, *whom none of the Princes of the World knew*. Nay, they generally laugh'd at the very Thoughts of it, and look'd upon those as Madmen, distracted Persons, who pretended to offer at any Proof of it. So that the immortal Life of our Bodies, as to the Discovery of it, is entirely owing to the Gospel of Christ ; because nothing but that Gospel could give us the Assurance of it.

2. The People of God, under the Old Testament, had some, but a very imperfect Acquaintance with it. They had some Knowledge of this Life and Immortality for the Bodies of Believers ; *Job* could therefore cry out, *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that I shall see him for my self*, chap. 19. 25, 27. The Psalmist comforted himself with this, that *he should awake and be satisfied with his Likeness*, Psal. 17. 15. The Prophet assur'd 'em, that *those that were in the Dust should awake, some to everlasting Life, and others to Shame and everlasting Contempt*. Yet all this was but a dark Discovery to what we have in the Gospel of our Redeemer : For,

3. We have a full Assurance of this Life given us by the Gospel, as to the Truth and Circumstances of it. How many Places might I prove the Truth of it from ? *The hour is coming in which all that are in their Graves shall come*

come forth, they that have done good to the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done evil to the Resurrection of Damnation, John 5. 28, 29. and several others; besides the actual Resurrection of our Lord himself, who rose *as the First-fruits of them that sleep*. How clearly are the very Circumstances of it brought to light too? Read 1 Cor. 15. at your Leisure, and there you are told with what Bodies we shall live for ever in another World; that a mighty Alteration will be wrought in 'em; and how fit they will be to lead such a Life as that of Heaven is: they'll be raised *spiritual* Bodies, not made of Flesh and Blood as they are in this World. They'll be raised *in Power*, and so will be much stronger, and more capable of acting for God, than ever they were here. They'll be rais'd *in Incorruption*, free from all the Principles of Mortality which they now carry about 'em; so that they shall not die any more, but be as the Angels of God. And lastly, they'll be raised *in Glory*: Under which Head, what a Description does the Gospel give us of our bodily Life in that other World? It tells us, that *when Christ who is our Life shall appear, then we also shall appear with him in glory*. It tells us, that we shall shine like the Lord of Glory, which will certainly be in a very glorious manner: *for he shall change our vile Body that it may be fashioned like to his glorious Body*, Philip. 3. 21. And thus, both as to the Truth and Circumstances of this future bodily Life, we owe all the Accounts of them that we can depend upon, to the Blessed Gospel. And the

the more clearly the Gospel has shone in the World, the more has the Knowledge of the Immortality of the Body spread and encreas'd.

4. Believers under the Gospel Dispensation are describ'd as fully depending upon this eternal Life. They expected it before, but now they do it much more firmly, and with a greater degree of Hope and Assurance. They are Persons who trust in God for it: *That we should not trust in our selves, but in God that raiseth the dead, 2 Cor. 1. 9.* They are Persons that wait, nay that wish and even groan for it: *Even we our selves groan within our selves, waiting for the Adoption, even the Redemption of our Bodies, Rom. 8. 23.* They are Persons that know this to be a Truth of God; *Knowing, that he who rais'd up Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you, 2 Cor. 4. 14.* Nay, they are seal'd up to this very Life, by the Spirit of Holiness, to prepare 'em for it, and by the Spirit of Consolation to assure 'em of their Title to it: *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are seal'd to the Day of Redemption, Eph. 4. 30.* Now this shews not only that the Gospel gives us the outward Discovery of a Life for the Body in another World, but that the more Persons are influenc'd by this Gospel, the more stedfast is their Belief and comfortable Expectation of it.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

1. Let this endear a Saviour to our Souls, and convince us more of the Worth of him.

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Let me tell thee, O Soul, thou can'st never have too great an Esteem for the Lord Jesus. He ought to be altogether lovely in our eyes. And what in the World is more likely to make him so than this Consideration, that he has both purchas'd Life and Immortality for us, and then given us the fullest Assurance of it? He is full of Excellency in his Person, as he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from Sinners. O learn to esteem him more for his personal Excellency and Goodness. And how precious is he in the Relation which he bears to us? in the Office which he discharges towards us, and in the great Salvation which he has wrought for us? Don't say any longer, as every Unbeliever virtually does, *There is no Form nor Comeliness in him, that we should desire him.* No! this is not the Language which becomes the Redeemed of the Lord; but we should say rather, *He is to us the chiefest of ten thousand.*

2. What Obligations to Holiness are they under who have such great Advantages and Encouragements vouchsafed to their Souls? This, my Friends, is the Case of every one of us who live under the Gospel: We have the greatest Advantages in the World, all the Encouragement we can reasonably desire. And yet, alas! how far is all this from being answer'd by the Lives of most Christians in our day? Methinks I hear many a poor Heathen crying, O that we had but the glorious Gospel which you enjoy! how should we deny
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all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts? How much Pains would we take for that Life above which is brought to light to you, but you despise and neglect it? Nay, Have not many of these Heathens a more Gospel-Temper than some of us who sit under the Light of it? It would affect one to hear how some of them have talk'd about the Vanity of the World, the Contempt of Riches, the Excellency of moral Virtue, &c. I'll give you but this Instance out of the Author † I before mentioned, of a *Bras-
lian* Old-man discoursing with an *European* Christian, when the Trade of *Europe* was first open'd with that Country. Pray, said he to the Christian, Why do your Country-men take so much Pains to come hither for our Wood? Have they not enough for Fuel? Yes, said he; but your *Brasil* Wood is of great Advantage to them in Trade, by which they grow very rich. Very well, said he; and when they are rich, do they not die as other Men? And whither then do their Riches go? Why to their Children and Relations. Then, says he, your Country-men are very foolish; for why should they undergo so much Toil and Danger to get that which they must part with when they come to die; and for the sake of their Children, who might live as contentedly without it? Do not you think that we love our Children as well as you? But we are contented that the same Earth which has nourished and provided for us, will do so for them too.

† *Stillington's*
Origines Sacrae.

too. Surely these barbarous *Indians* will condemn many a Christian that lives and caters for this World as if he were never to go out of it?

3. Let us value and improve the Gospel of Christ while we have the Light of it! Bless God that ever your Lot was cast under it. You might have been born in as dark a Corner of the Earth as some others are. Prize it as one of your grèatest Treasures. Ah! let not the Commonness of it render it contemptible in your Eyes. Improve it as well as value it: Walk in the Light while you have the Light, lest Darkness come upon you. That's a possible thing, notwithstanding the plenty of spiritual Food which we now enjoy. And if we don't thus improve it, better, ten thousand times better had it been for us, that we had never heard of a Christ at all; that we had never had one Sermon preach'd in our Ears. Heathens will be in a better Case than your Soul and mine, if we go on sinning against the Gospel. But God forbid that we should live so as to have the Privilege of Christians in this World, and the Damnation of Infidels, nay a greater Damnation in another. If we would avoid this, we must walk in the Light, that is, be guided and governed by it.

4. Let us live by Faith in this unseen Life and World, and make it our Business not to fall short of it. Live by Faith in it, believe it, realize it often to your own Souls. 'Twill never

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The Fifth Sermon.

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never influence us if we don't believe it. And why was it thus brought to light by a Gospel, but that we might thus believe it? Strive therefore to imitate those who liv'd in a much darker Day than you and I do; *who having not received the Promises, yet saw them afar off, and were perswaded of 'em, and embrac'd 'em.* Under the Influence of this Faith, let us prepare for this endless and immortal Life; such a Preparation there must be. Alas! it is brought to light not as a thing which every one may attain to, tho' he take no manner of Pains for it. No, no! 'tis only for them that *by a patient continuance in doing well, seek for Glory, Honour, and Immortality.* These shall certainly come to an eternal Life; but for others, nothing belongs to them but eternal Death. Strive therefore after this Life by this only Method of attaining to it. Seek it, for 'tis certainly worth seeking. Seek it by well-doing, seek it by a patient Continuance in well-doing: *for to them that by patient Continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, Honour, and Immortality, God will give eternal Life. But to them that are contentious and obey not the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness; Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul that doth evil.*

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Ver. 9. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling, not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began:*

Ver. 10. *But is now made manifest by the Appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished Death, and hath brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel.*

WE have at last finished the four general Parts which we observ'd in these Words; and under each Part have made some suitable, but brief, Application. But we shall now make one Discourse more by way of a more general Application of that which is the principal Subject of this Text; *viz.* Our being call'd into a State of Salvation. This is a Subject of the greatest Moment and Importance; and therefore

fore I shall be a little more particular than yet I have been in the Improvement of it. Now the Method I shall take to apply it in, shall be this following one.

I. I will shew you what Inferences of Truth may be drawn from what has been advanc'd upon the foregoing Argument.

II. I will direct you to enquire and find out what sort of Calling you have been called with.

III. I will speak a little to those who after serious Examination, and upon good Grounds, can say, they have felt what it is to be called into a State of Grace and Salvation.

IV. I shall conclude with speaking to those who have never yet been effectually Called at all.

I. I will shew you what Inferences of Truth may be drawn from what has been advanced upon the foregoing Argument. And,

i. From thence it may be inferred, that the Case of those who are out of the Sound of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is very dangerous and deplorable. I don't say it is altogether desperate; for I am for leaving 'em to their proper Judge, which is God, the Judge of the whole World. But, I say, it is a deplorable Case which they are in for want of

of the Gospel: they are in a great deal of Danger as to their Salvation, and the State of their Souls with respect to another World. This is plain from what I have been discoursing about God's Saving and Calling of us. For so I have therein shew'd you, that it is the Voice of the Gospel which God does ordinarily call us by. 'Tis true there is a loud Voice in the Works of God, and 'tis not unusual with him to make these an Instrument in his calling us into a State of Salvation. But generally it is the Gospel which is the main Instrument; and when these Works, either of Creation or Providence, either of Mercy or of Judgment, have any hand in it, 'tis most commonly in Conjunction with the Gospel: *Faith comes by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God, Rom. 10. 17.* O how should these benighted Souls therefore be wept over by us, to think how they are out of the Sound of that Gospel which God commonly uses as the Means to bring us to himself. Hereby their Conversion now, nay their eternal Salvation hereafter, is rendered next to impossible, that is, extremely difficult and dangerous. This Consideration is of admirable Use to make us value the Means of Grace; as that which has a considerable Hand in calling Sinners to Repentance, and thereby of saving 'em, according to the Connection which the Apostle makes in these Words. And it may be of no less admirable Use also to make us cautious how we resist the Calls of the Gospel, lest we drive 'em away, and so come to be in the

same dangerous Condition; viz. To be without God, without Christ, and without Hope in the World. For thus we shall be, if we are without the Means of God's calling us with an holy Calling, and thereby saving us from Sin and Hell. But further I infer,

2. The absolute Necessity of the Grace of God, in order to the Conversion of the Soul. This I infer from the Account which I gave you of the Nature of our effectual Calling, which I told you lay in the Spirit's prevailing with us to attend to, and comply with the Call of the Gospel without us: So that the latter is not enough unless the former concur with it to set it home upon our Minds and Hearts. It was the Error of our Countryman *Morgan*, a Monk of *Bangor*, who took upon him the Name of *Pelagius*, and of his Followers of old, that they asserted a sufficient Power in humane Nature to merit Salvation from God; that Man might acquire this Salvation without the Grace of Christ, and by the sole Aid and Strength of his own Free-will. This I confess is an Error which flatters the Pride and Vanity of corrupt Nature, and therefore no wonder that it got so many Defenders in those Times of Ignorance and Corruption. But I cannot but call it an Error, and that a very dangerous one: It gratifies the Pride of corrupt Nature, and takes us off from our Dependance upon the Grace of God, by destroying the Necessity of that Grace. And as it was condemn'd by the Council of *Carthage* soon

soon after it sprang up in the Church; so, which is more to be consider'd, it is directly condemn'd by the Holy Scriptures. We are frequently told there, that this Grace is necessary; that *No Man can come to Christ except the Father draw him, that without him we can do nothing, and that if the Ethiopian can change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots, then may they also do Good that are accustomed to do Evil.* See *John 6. 44. John 15. 5. Jer. 13. 23.* I know we may do more than generally we do to bring about our Conversion to God; we may consider the Calls which his Gospel sounds in our Ears; and we may pray over 'em in our secret Retirements and Devotions: but God will have the Glory of his Grace acknowledg'd and maintain'd. Thou must go out of thy self, and be ready to say, Lord, I am nothing; Lord, I can do nothing of my self alone; all my Sufficiency is of thee, and 'tis by the Grace of God that I am what I am. But again I infer,

3. The unaccountable Deafness which there is in the Heart of Man to the Calls of God exciting him to Repentance. This plainly appears from what has been delivered. The Spirit of God must open our Ears, or else they'll never hearken to the Voice of the Word without us. How often are these outward Calls sounding in the Ears of many a poor Sinner? And yet, alas! how few are awaken'd by em? How earnest are many of these Calls too? They are loud and impor-

tunate, and yet all the Thunder which they make cannot move nor awaken 'em. And does not that shew that they are exceeding deaf and obdurate? Nay, the very Spirit of God does commonly go with and second the Voice of the Gospel, by another of his own within the Door of the Sinner's Heart, both which he can cordially sleep under: and certainly then he must be very deaf and drowsy. So that the Case of the Generality of the World is like that of *Israel*, whom the Prophet describes the great God thus complaining of, *I have spoken to them but they have not heard, and I have called unto them but they have not answered*, Jer. 35. 17. and *all the day long have I stretched forth my hand to a disobedient and gainsaying People*, Rom. 10. 21. This is certainly the Case of the Soul in the corrupted State. The Wicked are said to be *like the deaf Adder that stoppeth her Ears, and will not hearken to the Voice of the Charmer, charming never so wisely*, Psal. 58. 4, 5. But then I must add that this is a culpable, because it is a voluntary, Deafness. They are such as stop their own Ears, and will not hearken to the Voice of the Charmer. God may sometimes give a Man up to a judicial Deafness, but that's when he has stopp'd his Ears himself first, when God has call'd and he refused, stretched out his Hand and he regarded it not, set at nought all his Counsels, and would none of his Reproof. So that this Deafness is thy Sin, as well as thy Unhappiness, because it is a chosen and a wilful thing.

4. From hence it may be also inferr'd, that there is a natural Connexion betwixt the Temper of the Soul and the Happiness or Salvation of it. I infer this from the Property of our Christian Calling; and the Consequence which I have shewn you does attend it. It is a holy Calling, that which makes the Soul so, stamps a divine Character and Impression upon it. And wherever this is, there Salvation goes along it. So that my Happiness does not lie in that which is without me, my Estate, my Enjoyments in the World; no, but in my inward Disposition. If I carry a God-like Temper in my own Soul, I so far partake of the Image of God as to his Blessedness and Felicity. These are the two great Things wherein the Saints partake of the divine Likeness: They are like him in Holiness, and they are like him in the Tranquillity and Blessedness which he enjoys; and both these depend upon each other. He that is like to the holy God will be like to the blessed God. Thus it will be in the next World: The Saints will be perfectly like God in the Holiness of their Tempers, and they'll be perfectly like him in the Pleasure and Contentment they'll enjoy. And thus it is, in some measure, here also. There is a Misery that naturally goes along with Sin, and there is Salvation or Felicity that accompanies real Holiness. Not that our Happiness is owing to nothing at all without us; no! there is a Christ satisfying for Sin, and fulfilling all Righteousness, whom we are to depend upon, and without him no
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inherent Righteousness or Holiness would be able to save us. But is this Christ formed in the Soul? Is there a Christ in us the Hope of Glory? then we may say we have that within us which is the Beginning of Heaven, and by virtue of his Merit and Satisfaction does make us imperfectly happy here, and prepares us to be perfectly so hereafter. I proceed,

II. To direct you to enquire and find out what sort of Calling you have been called with, whether it be only a more general and external, or also an effectual one. For so I have shewn you, there is an outward general Calling from the Means of Grace, and an effectual one by the Spirit of Grace; and that 'tis the latter of 'em we are saved by, the former being common even to condemned Hypocrites and Unbelievers. It concerns us therefore seriously to ask our selves, Which of these Callings we have been or are at present under. And that we may be able the better to judge of it, I shall lay down these four Particulars.

I. There are some Things which do plainly demonstrate, that if ever we have been called at all, it is only by an ineffectual Call; *i. e.* by them you may certainly understand that you are not called with that holy Calling which will effectually save you. Such, for instance, is gross Ignorance and Unacquaintedness with spiritual Things. Alas! There is more of this to be found amongst us than we are aware of. Nay, some that have sat under the clearest teaching,

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teaching, yet can't give a tolerable Account of the most necessary Things. Not give an Account of 'em did I say? nay, they have no tolerable Notions of 'em: And yet how a Person can be said to be effectually called by the Gospel, when he knows nothing of the principal Parts of it, such as the Fall of Man, the Redemption by Christ, the Covenant of Grace, &c. I do not understand. I own there are higher degrees of Knowledge which are not necessary; but to have no settled Account of 'em in our Heads, is to me a sad Token that such a Person has not been effectually called by the Gospel: and my Reason is, because he does not understand it; and having no real Acquaintance with it, certainly he cannot be changed by it. Such also is Profaneness, and living in any gross Sin. Here the Case is too plain, that the Gospel-Call has not been set home, for that *teaches us to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts*, Titus 2. 12. and positively tells us, that no such Sinners, *no Whoremongers, nor Drunkards, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Swearers, shall enter into the Kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. 6. 9.

2. Some Arguments there are which don't demonstrate that we are not, and yet do not demonstrate that we are called savingly and effectually. All that they argue is, that we have the external Voice of a God speaking to our Souls, and that we have the Means of an Effectual-Calling; but they cannot assure us that we are or are not effectually called already.

ready. Thus to profess the Lord Jesus Christ before Men, to sit under the most powerful Preaching, to communicate in the most sacred Ordinances, and that tho' it be done in the purest Church in this World; all this will prove nothing to an Effectual-Vocation: It shews that I am called in some sense, but discovers nothing of the Success of it, any farther than that it may reach my Mind, which it may do without sanctifying my Heart. There is little Advantage therefore to be made of such Considerations as these, in order to find out this Matter: And yet, alas! do not many make these the Support of their Hopes, the Arguments upon which they ground their Belief that they are call'd and brought home to God and Christ?

3. There are also some other Things which may easily be mistaken for this Effectual-Calling, but do really fall short of it. And here is thy greatest Danger, lest thou take that for a holy Calling that will save thee, which is no other than a general ineffectual one. I instance particularly in some Workings of Affection under the Word of God. The Seed may be sown, and receiv'd with Joy too, and yet dure but for a little while; which plainly shews, that there is no Saving-Effect wrought, *Mat. 13. 20.* I instance also in Light shining from the Gospel into the Mind or Understanding. This is necessary, and yet is not enough to make us Partakers of a Saving-Vocation: Few Persons knew more than

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than the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, and yet none were farther from Christ, and more hard'ned against the Gospel-Offer than they. I instance in a deep Sense of Sin as to the Evil of it, and the Necessity of a Change to be wrought in us. The Voice of God in his Word and Gospel may reach so far as to bring me to this, and yet I may not be thoroughly call'd by it; for this amounts to no more than a bare Conviction of Conscience, which is not enough without an actual Change in the Heart and Affections. I instance in a deep Remorse and Terror upon the account of Sin, which is more than a bare Sense of its being a great Evil. This arises from the Thoughts of personal Guilt contracted by us, and of a Liableness to eternal Damnation incurr'd by us through that Guilt: yet this may be without an Effectual-Calling; it may speedily wear off again, and so the Call we were under vanish into Air. I instance, lastly, in an external Alteration of our Life and Way, nay in performing every Duty as to the outward part of it, which an effectually-called Person may do. Thus far even a Hypocrite may go, and thus far the Gospel may persuade any of us to go; and yet it may never prevail to call us into a State of Salvation. Well! but what then shall we have to prove it, when we are called in an effectual manner? To this I answer, by adding,

4. There are some Arguments which do infallibly demonstrate that we are called effectually

fectually and savingly. Thus 'tis certain I am effectually called by the Gospel, when it has brought me to the deliberate Choice of God and Christ for my Portion, to renounce all that this World can give me in comparison of 'em, and to love 'em above all Things, even with all my Heart, and Soul, and Mind, and Strength. 'Tis certain that I am effectually called by the Gospel, when I am so convinc'd by it of the Evil of Sin, as to hate, and mortify, and forsake it. 'Tis certain that I am effectually called by the Gospel, when I am brought to obey the Voice of it let it call me whithersoever it will; when, tho' a Christ call me to follow him to his Cross, I dare not disobey him; this is to hearken to his Voice, and so is a Sign that he calls me to the purpose. 'Tis certain, in short, that I am effectually called, when the Change within and the Change without me is uniform and universal; when the Mind, Heart, and Affections, have a holy Bias clapt upon every one of 'em; and when to this inward Change of Principles, I join a universal outward Obedience to God's Commandments. I may fall into Sin, but I must be generally one of whom it may be said, as was of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, that *they walk'd in all the Commandments of the Lord blameless*, Luke 1. 6. These are the Scripture Arguments of an Effectual-Vocation, and therefore will prove us to be savingly call'd if they are to be found in us.

III.

III. I shall speak a little to those who, after serious Examination and upon good Grounds, can say, They have felt what it is to be called into a State of Grace and Salvation. Have you seriously weigh'd this important Affair betwixt God and your own Souls? for 'tis the most important Concern in the World. And can you, upon an impartial Judgment made herein, say, that you have felt the powerful Voice of God making its way into your very Soul, speaking it out of Darkness into marvellous Light, and from the Power of Satan to the living God? Then let me advise you to four things.

I. Be Thankful. You ought to be so because it is God that called you out of *Egypt*, a State of Slavery and Misery, into a spiritual *Canaan*, i. e. a State of Liberty and Salvation. You have Reason to be thankful that you have had the outward Voice of the Gospel sounding in your Ears, when you might have been cast among the Pagan part of the World, in a Land of Darkness, where *for want of Vision the People perish*, Prov. 29. 18. You have reason to be more thankful still, that the Voice of the Gospel has sounded into your Hearts, when so many others have Ears to hear but hear not, so as that they shall live and be saved. The former is a distinguishing Mercy to the Christian World, which you are a part of: the latter is a distinguishing Mercy to your own Soul above most others; and therefore certainly it calls for peculiar Gratitude at your hands.

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2. Be Joyful. You must not imagine that when I press you to this, I direct you not to be Sorrowful; no! we are to mourn for our Sins, as well as to be joyful for our Mercies: we are to mourn because we heark'ned to the Call of a Gospel no sooner: we are to mourn because we have still so much Sin to be lamented in us. This Mourning is very consistent with being joyful: *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*, Mat. 5. 4. But I press you to be Joyful as well as Sorrowful. It is certainly your Duty to be so. *Rejoyce in the Lord always, and again I say rejoyce*, Phil. 4. 4. And have you not the greatest Reason to be so? Consider the State which you are call'd into: It is a State of Salvation. And should not a Soul that's sav'd be in a joyful Frame whenever he thinks of it? Nay consider, that those very things which make others sorrowful, may make you to be joyful: What are they, you'll say? Why, I mean the Afflictions of this Life; for even they shall be turned into Means of furthering that Salvation which you are call'd to. See *Rom. 8. 28.* where that Promise is made to them that are thus called; *All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose.* So that look either to what you are saved from, even Guilt and Damnation, or to what you are not yet thoroughly saved from, your present Sufferings and Temptations, and still you have reason to be joyful.

3. Be

3. Be Obedient. I mean, hearken to the Voice of God, which still has some Word or other for you to attend to. You have obey'd him when he call'd you out of Darknes into marvellous Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God. He calls you now to *walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith you are call'd*, Eph. 4. 1. He calls you to be *holy as he is holy*; to *grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*; to *press forwards towards the mark of the Prize of the High-calling of God in Christ Jesus*: He calls you to *let your Light shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven*. And how many particular Duties does he now call you to? As you are Masters, and the Heads of Families which he has plac'd under you, to see that his Worship be kept up in them, and that those who are under your Care and Charge may serve the Lord: As you are Servants and Subjects, Members of the Nation, City, or Society you belong to: Consult the Book of God, where he speaks as it were by a Voice from Heaven to the Children of Men, and there you'll find many a Call which he has for you and me still to listen and attend to. All these must be obeyed, or else we don't answer the Vocation wherewith we are called.

4. Be constant. Take heed of falling from that State of Salvation which you have been call'd into. If the Love of that God that call'd you will keep you from falling away, I am
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sure it must be by Caution on your part: *Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall, 1 Corin. 10. 12.* I have told you what you have been call'd to, even to *his eternal Kingdom and Glory.* That can't be attain'd by Apostates, and such as draw back, for they *draw back to Perdition.* It must therefore be by Constancy and Continuance in well-doing that we must attain it. Stir up then thy Fear and Caution, in order to make thee constant; and in the Apostle's Language, *Let us therefore fear, lest a Promise being left us of entering into his Rest, any of us should seem to come short of it, Heb. 4. 1.* I'll conclude my Application to you with two other Expressions of the same Apostle; *Wherefore, holy Brethren, Partakers of the heavenly Calling, consider the Apostle and High-priest of your Profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to him that appointed him, even as Moses was faithful in all his House;* and therefore so ought you to be faithful also, *Heb. 3. 1, 2.* And *Eph. 1. 16, 17, 18.* I cease not to make mention of you in my Prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus, the Father of Glory, may give you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation, in the Knowledge of him; the eyes of your Understandings being enlightned, that ye may know what is the Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints; That you may have a more enlarged knowledge of the glorious Hopes which he has call'd us to, and which he will make us Possessors of with the Saints above.

I come

I come now, in the 4th place, to conclude with speaking to those who have never yet been effectually called at all. And O! that I knew how to speak to these miserable Souls so as to make them hear the Voice of the Son of God and live. What shall I say to thee, O distressed Sinner? Shall I weep over thee as Jesus did over poor *Jerusalem*, that had long been under his Calls, but gave a deaf Ear to all? Surely thy Case deserves to be wept over too. O therefore that thou hadst known in this thy Day the Things which belong to thy Peace! But here, blessed be God, I am obliged to stop. I cannot say, now they are hid from thine Eyes: I hope they are not: nay I believe they are not, if thou hast any Sense, if thou hast any Tenderneſs left in thy Heart. Is there ſome Hope therefore left that thou may'ſt yet hearken to the Call of Chriſt? Bleſs thy God, that it is a Door of Hope which ſtands open for thee. But be ſure you don't ſlip the Opportunity which you yet have. Speedily fall in, by letting the Call of the Goſpel have a ſaving Influence and Effect upon you. And to that End, let me recommend theſe four Things.

1. Place thy ſelf within the Sound of the Calls of Chriſt, and where they are moſt loud and earneſt. Some are glad of any opportunity to get out of the reach of 'em. Alas! they make a troubleſome Noiſe in their Ears, that diſturbs 'em in their Sins; and therefore they ſeldom care to come where they are

heard. This is never the way to be called effectually, if you wont have Patience to be call'd at all. Place thy self where these Calls are loudest and most earnest. I don't mean we are always to hear that Minister that has the best Lungs and the strongest Voice; but there where the Gospel is most clearly explained, there where it is most heartily urged, there where it is most purely administered, and there where we can receive the greatest Advantage to our Souls. That's the Way where thou art most likely to be won and engaged to come over to Christ.

2. Pray over the Calls of God, as one that knows 'tis his Grace must render 'em effectual. There are many encouraging Scriptures to perswade you to this, when God tells you that he *will give you a new Heart, and put a new Spirit within you; and take away the stony Heart, and give you a Heart of Flesh*, Ezek. 36. 26. and that he *will give his Spirit to them that ask him*. This is certainly Encouragement. But then, *For these things will I be sought to, saith the Lord*. And you can't expect it should be otherwise. 'Tis Grace must set home the Voice of the Minister, the Voice of the Ordinances, the Voice of the Law and Gospel. And can I expect Grace if I don't think it worth the asking for? Pray therefore over every Call thou hearest from the blessed God, till some or other has thoroughly awak'ned thee.

3. Meditate

3. Meditate upon the Things you are called by Christ and the Gospel to. Hast thou been hearing them speaking a Word to thy Soul? Sit down, and consider the Matter over. 'Tis the want of this that generally makes 'em pass away like a Tale that is told. We don't think upon what we hear and read, and so 'tis like Water spilt upon the Ground. You must be at a little Pains, or else no Benefit can be expected. Think it not therefore a hard Task to spend a little time in reviewing what you are call'd to. Let the Musings of your Mind, which are so apt to wander after every Trifle that diverts you, fix sometimes upon the Matters of the greatest moment. A few Thoughts spent this way may be a Means of calling and saving you, when many a thoughtless Sinner shall pass from hearing a Christ say, *Come unto me and I will give thee Rest*, to hear him pronounce that dreadful Sentence, *Depart, Accursed, into everlasting Fire*.

4. Harken to every Call of Christ, as that which necessarily must be obeyed, and yet possibly may be thy last. They must, O Sinner, be followed by Repentance and Faith, Holiness, &c. or let me tell thee, thou art as surely undone as thou art now sitting or standing in this Assembly. 'Tis possible this may be the last Call thou may'st ever have: the very next may be to Die and to be Judged. Lord! how serious should you be under such Calls as these? Bring such a Thought then

into the Presence of God with you: I am now call'd to be happy or miserable for ever, and who can tell whether I may ever have such a Call any more?

Thus I have given you my Thoughts of one of the best Methods to attain this Effectual-Calling.

But now against all this every one will be apt to say, Sir, What do you mean by it? What is it to us? Most Persons will be apt to apply what was said to those who are effectually call'd, because they think they are of that Number: But alas! for that which is spoken to the uncall'd Sinner, they think they have nothing to do with it; and so they hear it readily enough, perhaps, for some others, but not for themselves. Would to God all this last part of my Discourse might be nothing to the purpose in this Sense, that there were none here to apply it to! But alas! my Friends, our Congregations are stuff'd with these poor Creatures, tho' they little think of it. O that you and I may not be deceiv'd as to our own Case! Consider then what Conscience does say to thee when thou call'st it to an impartial Reckoning. Consider what it tells thee when thou comparest thy self with the Scripture-Account of those that are call'd so as to be saved. If it can safely tell thee 'tis all well as to this high Affair, I heartily rejoyce at it. Go home therefore, and take the Comfort and Advice I have

laid

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laid before you. If it tells you are not yet call'd in an effectual manner, go and follow the Method now laid down; for certainly you have need of it.

And may the Great God, *who quickneth the Dead, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were,* set in with your Endeavours, and so call you by his Spirit now, that you may be sav'd both now and for ever. *Amen.*

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SERMON VI.

JOHN Ch. 20. Ver. 17.

*Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not ; for
I am not yet ascended to my Father :
But go to my Brethren, and say unto
them, I ascend unto my Father and
your Father, and to my God and your
God.*

THese are some of the first Words which
our Saviour utter'd after his Resurre-
ction ; and they are full of Comfort
to all that love the Lord Jesus Christ
in Sincerity. If you look into the History of
the latter part of our Saviour's Life in this
World, you'll find that it was much employ'd
in administring spiritual Consolations to his
Disciples. Both his Discourses to 'em, and
his Prayer to his Father for 'em, were chiefly
for their Union and their Satisfaction : nay,
while he was hanging upon the accursed
Tree, when one would have thought he
should have nothing to think upon but his
Pains and Sufferings, yet he could not even
then

then forbear applying spiritual Balm to a broken-hearted Sinner: *This Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* And as he concluded his mortal Life with speaking Peace to his believing Disciples, so he begun that new one which he had after his Resurrection in the same manner: such was his Concern for the Comfort and Satisfaction of precious Souls.

It is the Note which an excellent Person makes upon these Words: * “All true
 * *Baxter.* “Believers, *says he*, should labour to
 “get this most comfortable Text
 “deeply imprinted upon their Minds, and
 “never think of God, or come to him, but
 “as here describ’d; *My Father and your Father,*
 “*my God and your God.*” And that we may
 have it thus imprinted upon us, I shall briefly
 speak to it by raising some Observations from
 it. Now the first Thing which I observe from
 the Words, is this:

I. That there may be an untimely Fondness and Curiosity in religious Persons, which will not be acceptable to, nor gratify’d by, Christ. *Mary* was now mightily pleas’d that she had found her Lord; and, as one perfectly transported, she would needs embrace him. This, ’tis probable, proceeded from her wonderful Affection to him, and also from a Curiosity she had to know whether it was her Lord or no, and whether he was truly risen. But see how Christ carries it towards her; *Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father.*

ther. We cannot suppose that he was absolutely against her embracing him, now he was risen from the Dead; for we find that he did permit several to touch him after his Resurrection: *They came and held him by the Feet, and worship'd him*, Matt. 28. 9. And he commanded an unbelieving Thomas to *put his Fingers into the print of the Nails, that he might not be faithless, but believing*, John 20. 27. But he forbids her to touch him at this time, that she might hasten about a more important Work, to go and comfort his Disciples with the News of his Resurrection. 'Tis better to be employ'd in Acts of Service to Christ, in promoting the Comfort and Welfare of our Fellow-Christians, than in gratifying our own Inclinations, though they may not be absolutely sinful. When our Saviour had told Peter by what Death he should glorify God, he began to enquire concerning John, how he would dispose of him; *Lord, what shall this Man do?* But what says our Saviour to him? *If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee, follow thou me*, John 21. 22. q. d. You are too inquisitive about a Matter which does not concern you, your Business is to discharge your Duty; be careful to follow me, and don't trouble your self about what I will do with others. And so as to Acts of Love and Affection to Christ; the best way to discover them is by being employ'd in the Service of Christ: not but that the inward Actings of Love to him are exceeding necessary; but it may be a Sin to be taken up in these private Exercises of

of Love, when we should be promoting his Interest in the World.

2. I observe further from these Words, that Christ did not ascend so as to continue in Heaven immediately after his Resurrection, but tarry'd for some time amongst his Disciples in this World: *Touch me not*, says he, *for*

I am not yet ascended. It may be † translated, *I am not yet to ascend, or I shall not yet ascend*

to my Father: you'll have time enough to converse with me in that familiar manner before I shall go up to Heaven. Some think

* that he did ascend soon after he spoke this to *Mary*, and that he came down again to converse with his Disciples till the forty Days were expired. Whether that

* See Whitby in loc.

Whiston on the Accomplish. of Scripture Prophecies. Append.

be true or not, 'tis plain he did not so ascend as to remain in the heavenly State till the time I but now mentioned. Now it was necessary that Christ should remain with his Disciples a considerable time, that he might convince 'em of the Truth of his being risen. They were to be Witnesses of it to the rest of the World; and it was a Matter of so great Importance, that it could not easily be too well confirm'd and attested: for, *If Christ be not risen our Faith is in vain, and we are yet in our Sins*, 1 Cor. 15. 17. For this Reason did the wise and merciful Redeemer delay his Ascension; he was content to be out of Heaven for forty Days, that

that we might be fully satisfied that God had rais'd him from the Dead. In these forty Days he openly convers'd with those that were to bear witness of it. He appear'd to so many, that they could never be deceiv'd; to *Mary Magdalen*, to *Cephas*, to *James*, to the Twelve twice, and to five hundred Brethren at once, 1 Cor. 15. 5. He confirm'd it to several of their Senses; they saw him, they discours'd with him, they handled him, and *Thomas* put his Hands into the Print of the Nails. And what was all this for, but that we might believe? If you can believe the Resurrection of Christ, you may be sure that God has accepted him, (for he was *justify'd in the Spirit* who was the Agent in his Resurrection) and consequently that he will accept of every Soul that loves and obeys him. But how can you doubt of this when he has given you so many convincing Proofs of it?

3. I observe again from these Words, that there is a most dear and intimate Relation betwixt the Lord Jesus Christ and true Believers. *Go tell my Brethren*, says he, *that I ascend*, &c. He owns 'em for his dear and near Relations; and this he does when he was going to be exalted to the right-hand of God. While he was in the State of Humiliation, he calls 'em sometimes by the Title of Servants, sometimes by the Title of his Friends, sometimes his Children, and once he call'd 'em his Brethren too: *Whosoever will do the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother*, Matth. 12. 50. And when

now when he was enter'd upon his State of Exaltation, he continues the same endearing Appellation, *My Brethren*. How comfortable a Consideration is this, that the Glory of Christ has not diminished his Affection to Believers, but he still carries as great a Love to 'em as ever he had? This may shew us how great is the Privilege of such as are true Christians; they are put into a more honourable Relation to Christ than his natural Kindred. These were his Relations by natural Generation, but the others are so by spiritual Regeneration. And it may also shew us how we should carry it to all that love the Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly we ought to love them, and honour them, whether they are rich or poor, whether they are honour'd or despis'd by this World; for they are the Brethren of the Son of God.

4. I observe from these Words, That it will be very much to our Comfort and Satisfaction, to consider that Christ is ascended to his Father and to our Father, to his God and to our God. This is the Message which *Mary* was to carry to the Disciples: and the Design of it was to comfort 'em under the Thoughts of his Departure from them. They were now frightned and cast down because he was dead: They thought their Cause was utterly lost, that they should only be insulted by their implacable Enemies, who would certainly be unmerciful when they had got 'em at an Advantage. They look'd upon all their Hopes

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as utterly disappointed. But in the midst of these distracting Fears, Christ sends a Messenger out of their own Number with these joyful Tidings, that though he was going to leave this World, yet it was only to ascend to that God whom both he and they were infinitely dear to. Now here I shall speak to these following Things,

1. I shall consider how God is *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

2. I shall shew you that he is the *God and Father also of all true Believers*: so that he carries the same Relation to them that he does to Christ.

3. I shall prove that he is truly ascended, according to what he promis'd in these Words.

4. I shall shew how comfortable a Consideration this is, that he is *ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God*.

1. I shall consider how God is the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. And he is so, if you consider him as to his divine Nature, by eternal Generation. For in respect of this he is *the express Image of his Father's Person*, Heb. 1. 3. *i. e.* they are one in Essence, and yet he is his Father that begot him from Eternity. Thus he is the only begotten Son of God. But I would now understand the Phrase in reference to Christ as he is Mediator: and so God is his God and Father

1. By

1. By miraculous Conception. It was he that gave him a Being, as he does to every Creature both in the visible and invisible World. But he not only gave him a Being, as he does to us, but 'twas he that form'd him in the Womb of the Virgin by the overshadowing Power of the Holy Ghost. And in this respect he is said to be the Son of God, *Luke 1. 35. The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be call'd the Son of God.* He was not the Son of a Man, as others are, but was born of God in a peculiar manner.

2. By Consecration, or voluntary Designation. It is one thing which does mightily encourage the Faith and Hope of Believers, that whatever our Saviour did in order to their Salvation, had the Broad-Seal of Heaven to ratify and confirm it. He acted by an immediate Commission from the blessed God. And in this respect he is also the Son of the Most High: See *John 10. 36.* The Jews were very angry with Christ for making himself the Son of God; but he confutes 'em by this Argument, The Scripture does sometimes call those Persons Gods who were appointed by God to some peculiar Office or Employment; and how can you then say of him whom the Father hath sanctify'd and sent into the World, *Tbou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God?* No! this can be no Blasphemy, but a most certain Truth. I am the Son of God,
and

and he is my God and Father, because he sent me, he sanctify'd me, he set me apart to be the Mediator between him and a lost World. Here then he argues from his Commission to his Relation to God: so that he was the Son of God as it was he that appointed him to the sacred Office of a Mediator.

3. By Covenant. There is a Covenant which God makes with his People in this World, wherein he promises to pardon and save them in a way of Repentance, Faith, and holy Obedience. And there is also a Covenant which God has made with Christ the Head of Believers. In this Christ undertakes to do the Will of his Father, to suffer and die in order to the Salvation of Souls. And in the same Covenant God promises to carry him through this difficult Undertaking, that he would *not leave his Soul in Hell*, but that he should *see of the travail of his Soul and be satisfy'd*, and that this *Work of the Lord should prosper in his hands*. See *Isai. 53. 10*. And to this purpose some understand that Passage in *Zachar. 6. 13*. where God promises several things to him *whose Name is the Branch*, i. e. to Christ: and at last it is said, *And the Counsel of Peace shall be between them both*; i. e. Both God the Father and God the Son did mutually consult and agree upon reconciling, making Peace between God and the Souls of Men. Thus then God was the God of our Lord Jesus, as he was his God in Covenant. He did by a solemn Promise oblige and engage himself to act as a God towards him.

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4. By

4. By the Consent and Choice of his Soul. We are to take God for our God and Father. He has a Right to be so, but we are to choose him to be so. We are to be his by our own Consent. And thus did our Saviour also freely consent that God should be his God. This cannot be doubted, if we consider how frequently he calls him by such Titles as *My God*, *My Father*, and the like. Nor can we think that he who has made it the Duty of all Persons to choose God for their God in the most hearty manner, should never do so himself. This is a necessary Duty resulting from the Relation there is between God and a Creature; nay, it is but a natural Expression of our Love to the Creator, and in one word, the Foundation of an unfeigned Devotedness to him. So that as God promis'd to be his God, as you have heard under the last Head, so we need not doubt but he most heartily accepted him to be so.

5. By supporting him under his greatest Difficulties and Afflictions. It is one great Argument to believe that God is our God, when he does not forsake us in our Afflictions, when he affords us all necessary Supports under 'em. Now thus did the Father support his own Son when he was in his greatest Agonies. Wherefore our Lord calls upon him as his God when he was suffering upon the Cross, in the Extremity of his Pain and Misery, *My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?* Mat. 27. 46. *q.d.* I have found thee to be my God,

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an all-sufficient one to me, when thou hast carry'd me thro' a whole Life of Sufferings; and why dost thou so forsake me now, when it is almost over? Wilt thou leave me after all the Cordials thou hast given me to this moment? No! thou dost sensibly withdraw from me, but thou art still my God, and therefore I believe thou wilt not wholly forsake me. The Sufferings of our Redeemer were such as nothing but an Almighty Arm could have enabled him to bear. He suffer'd both from Men and Devils; nay, he trod the Wine-press of his Father's Wrath, so that both Heaven and Earth seem'd to be conspir'd against him. But that Hand that smote him, did at the same time secretly support him. And herein it appear'd to be the Hand both of a God and a Father.

6. By his publick Owning and Rewarding of him. As he supported him under his greatest Sufferings, so he openly rewarded him; partly by raising him from the Dead, and partly by making him the Lord of all this World. And in both these Respects he is describ'd to be his God and Father. In respect of his Resurrection; for *he was declar'd to be the Son of God with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness by his Resurrection from the Dead, Rom. i. 4.* And in respect of his being the Lord of all things; for he is set *up at the right-hand of the Majesty on high*, and therefore it is said of him, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, Heb. i. 5.* In short, God has openly re-

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warded

warded the Saviour of your Soul and mine; and by that he declar'd that he was not ashamed to be call'd his God. For thus the Psalmist intimates when he says, *God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the Oyl of Gladness above thy Fellows*, Psal. 45. 7.

7. As 'tis in the Enjoyment of him that Christ will be for ever happy in another World. He is the Fountain of all that Glory which he is eternally to partake of. 'Tis God that is to be *all in all*. He'll be so to us, and he'll be so to Christ himself. This we may infer from that solemn Profession which our Saviour makes of his Faith in God, and of his being restor'd to be for ever happy in the Enjoyment of him, *Psal. 16. 10, 11. Thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, nor suffer thine Holy-one to see Corruption: thou wilt shew me the path of Life: in thy Presence is fullness of Joy, at thy right-hand there are Pleasures for evermore*. Intimating, that as he expected to be rais'd again, and that to a Life of most perfect Blessedness; so that Blessedness was to result from the Presence and Enjoyment of God. 'Tis true, as a God he is himself the Fountain of Blessedness; and instead of deriving his Felicity from another, does communicate it to every Creature both in the upper and lower World. But as Man he is a dependant Being, and so fetches all his Supports and Comforts from that God who satisfies the Desire of every living thing, whether in Heaven or Earth.

APPL.

APPLICATION.

1. Is God the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? then all that are not the Friends of Christ are in a most miserable Condition: That God who is so much the Friend of Christ will be an Enemy to them. And what greater Enemy can'st thou have than the eternal God, that can crush thee to nothing by the weight of his least Finger? For who can stand before him when once he is angry? Alas! we cannot bear one drop of his fiery Displeasure, when darted into our Spirits. The very Thoughts of an angry God, an Almighty Being with his Jealousy smoking against Sinners, are frightful, though we are under no Apprehension that we are concern'd in it. How terrible then must his Wrath be to those who are so deeply concern'd with it, as they are who have not the Love of Christ shed abroad in their Hearts! for they are accursed of God to the highest degree, as the Apostle intimates 1 Cor. 16. 22. *If any Man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maran-atha*; which is an Allusion to the highest degree of Excommunication in the Jewish Church; and so signifies that the greatest Curse does belong to them.

2. Is God the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? then 'tis by him that we must get an Interest in God. He that would secure

the Father to be his Friend, must go to the Son as the way to him: therefore are we told that *he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and no Man cometh unto the Father but by him*, John 14. 6. There are many ways of making an Interest in Men; but there is but one to get an Interest in God; and that is by his Son, out of whom he is a consuming Fire. 'Tis good to have a share in the Prayers of good Men; but they can never make God thy Friend without the Prayer of his own Son. 'Tis good to have a Stock of Charity and Good Works; but alas! all our Righteousnesses are but as filthy Rags when they are not cover'd with the Righteousness of Christ. Beware therefore of slighting a Christ, when he is offer'd unto you: Secure him for your Friend and Advocate in Heaven: for you cannot depend upon the least Favour but upon his Account.

3. Is God the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? then they can never miscarry who have Christ to plead and intercede for them. Will God, think you, deny the Prayer of his beloved Son, he that he is a God and a Father to? No more than a tender Father can be deaf to the reasonable Petitions of his Child that he loves as his very Life. 'Tis true, a Father may sometimes deny the Requests of his most beloved Son; but God can never deny the Prayer of the Lord Jesus, because he prays for nothing but what is most reasonable, nothing but what is for his Father's Glory,

Glory, nothing but what is agreeable to his Father's Will. And therefore get Christ to be thy Advocate in Heaven, and thou can'st never miscarry. You will find him to be a much more powerful Advocate than any of the Saints that Papists depend upon. They cannot hear the Desires they express to 'em; and if they could, they could never answer 'em: for as there is but *one God*, so but *one Mediator*. And, thanks be to God, this is so prevailing a one, that no Man's Cause can miscarry when he undertakes it.

4. If God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, hence you may see how necessary it is that we should pray in the Name of Christ. So we are directed to do by our Saviour himself: *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorify'd in the Son; If you shall ask any thing in my Name, I will do it*, John 14. 13, 14. Here we are encourag'd to believe that no acceptable Prayer shall be unsuccessful; but then to make our Prayers acceptable, they must be put up in the Name of Christ: God will never hear them but for the sake of his own Son. — And accordingly this is one great part of our Saviour's Intercession, to present our Prayers to God for his Acceptance. As the Priests under the Law were to offer Incense while the People were praying, so Christ prays and intercedes while we are praying and pleading for our own Souls. See *Revel. 8. 3.* And so also *John 16. 27.* In that day, says our Saviour,

after I am gone up to Heaven, *ye shall ask in my Name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you.* I need not say so, there is no necessity of my telling you that; you may be sure that I will join my Prayers along with yours; only see that you offer 'em in my Name. It is the Name of Christ which must render all our Services pleasing to God.

5. Is God the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? then see that you be united to Christ in order to have Communion with God: for there is no Communion with the Father otherwise than by the Son. See *John 14. 23. If a Man love me he will keep my Words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our Abode with him.* Here are several Things very observable to all that would have Communion with God and Christ. First, There must be a Love to Christ; we must be united to him in Heart and Affection: then this must be such a Love as makes us keep his Words. Obedience is the Test of our Affection to Christ: If we have this obediential Love, then we may be sure of the Love of God; nay, we may conclude that we shall not only be loved of God, but as an Argument of it both God and Christ will come and make their Abode with us, they'll give us constant and delightful Communion with 'em. So that, that which must entitle thee to Communion with God, is a real, a fructifying, and an obediential Love to his Son. Briefly, Union to Christ is necessary

cessary to Communion with God. He will not converse immediately with Sinners. The Majesty and Holiness of his Nature call for a greater Distance to be maintain'd between him and them. And therefore though his Mercy and Compassion to poor perishing Souls inclines him to admit them to a renewed Intercourse with him; yet he resolves it shall be carried on through a Mediator. And what then should they resolve, but to secure this Mediator to be theirs? to take care that they be not at Variance with him, but that there be a real and lasting Union of Interests and Affections between him and them?

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SERMON VII.

JOHN XX. 17.

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not ; for I am not yet ascended to my Father : But go to my Brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.

HAVING consider'd from these Words, how God is *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; I am now in the second Place to shew you, that he is also *the God and Father of true Believers*: so that he carries the same Relation to them which he does to Christ. For thus he tells them, that he was going to ascend, not only to his God, but to their God, &c. and upon this Account he calls them his Brethren. Now that he carries this Relation to them also, will appear from these following Things.

1. That they receive their natural Beings from his Power and Goodness. For it is *in him*
that

that they all live, and move, and have their Beings. For which reason *they are his Off-spring,* Acts 17. 28. This is but a common Relation, in respect of which the whole World may be said to be the Children of God. He is the God and Father of every Creature, and particularly of Men, because he is the Creator of their Bodies, and the Father of their Spirits. But though it is a common, yet it is a very valuable Relation; *for his tender Mercies are over all his Works.* We may argue from the creating Goodness of God to his Readiness constantly, to take care of us. It's true, when that Goodness is abus'd impenitently, *he that made us will not have mercy on us, and he that form'd us will shew us no favour,* Isa. 27. 11. But they who act as the Off-spring of the divine Being, may be sure of a part in his heavenly Protection.

2. They are spiritually regenerated and born of God. 'Tis a Paradox to corrupt Nature, but yet 'tis a most unquestionable Truth, that every good Man is twice born before ever he goes out of this World. He is born twice, but he can die but once. Thus such Persons are said to be *born again, and born of God, and born of the Spirit, and born from above,* 1 John 5. 1. 1 Peter 1. 23. John 3. 8. i. e. They have the Image of God restor'd upon their Souls; they have the Life of God recover'd after it was lost by Sin: and all this is done by supernatural Grace, and the Spirit of God working effectually upon their Spirits. Now as soon as they are thus regenerated and born of

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of God. God is their Father; a new Relation does presently commence betwixt God and them, and they that were before his Enemies are now his beloved Children: for now they carry his Image upon their Spirits; not only his natural, but his moral Image; his Image not only as a spiritual and immortal, but as a holy Being. This entitles them to an immediate Interest in his peculiar Favour.

3. They do accept of, and consent to have God for their God and Father. He will never consent to be a God to that Person who will not have him to be so. You must accept of him by the Choice of your Heart and Will, and say, Lord I am willing, and I now give my self up to be thy Child, thy Son, thy Daughter for ever. This is that which every Believer does at his first Conversion: he then cries, in the Language of the Prophet, *The Lord is my Portion, saith my Soul*, Lam. 3. 24. Till then they spake a quite contrary Language, *The World is my Portion*, and *who will shew me any good*; but now it is, *Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon me*. There is then a Covenant struck up betwixt God and them; and the Language of this Covenant is, I solemnly take God to be my God, and as I expect from him whatever, as a God, he can be and do for me, so I resolve to carry it as a Person devoted to him. From this Covenant there arises a most dear and comfortable Relation betwixt God and the Believer: *I enter'd into Covenant with thee, and thou becomest mine*, Ezek. 16. 8.

4. They

4. They are adopted into the Family of God. We read in Scripture of the Household of Faith: God is the Head, the Governour, and the Father of this Household; and every true Christian is one of the Members of it: nay he is not only a Member in general, not only a Servant, but a Child in the House of God. He is immediately admitted such upon his declaring to have God for his God and Father. This is that which we call God's adopting us to be his Children; which is an Allusion to that Custom, when Persons that have no Children do take the Children of others and call 'em after their own Names, and maintain 'em as if they were their own Offspring. We are by Nature or Sin the Children of the Devil; but when God converts us, he takes us out of the Devil's Family, and calls us after his own Name. To that purpose you may consult such Scriptures as these, *To as many as receiv'd him, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, John 1. 12. In the fullness of Time God sent forth his Son, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons, Gal. 4. 5. Predestinated to the Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ, Ephes. 1. 5. But ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father, Rom. 8. 15.* From all which Places compar'd we may observe, that God has his adopted Children, that that Adoption is owing to Christ, that whenever God adopts us he puts a Spirit of Prayer into us, and that this is the Privilege of as many as receive Christ, or of all Believers.

5. They

5. They have all necessary Provision made by God both for their temporal, spiritual, and eternal Welfare. This surely does abundantly prove him to be their God and Father. Did he never take any care of 'em, did he leave 'em to the wide World to shift as well as they could, he might be thought to be their Enemy, or not to be their faithful Friend. But as a Father provides for his natural Children, so does God for his spiritual ones: nay, he provides for 'em not as a Father only, but as a God. He acts as their God and Father at the same time. He is so their Father as to be their all-sufficient Friend. Thus we are told that such Persons *can never want any good thing; that he will never leave them nor forsake them, and that in the World to come he will give them an Inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* And surely this is so rich Provision as shews him to be a most gracious Father.

3. The next thing I am to do, is to shew that Christ is truly ascended according to what he promis'd in the Words of my Text: for so he tells *Mary* and the other Disciples, *I ascend, &c.* I am now just going up to Heaven, and this may be a mighty Satisfaction to you in your Pilgrimage through this World, in all that you are to suffer for my Name's sake. But now if after all this Christ should not be really ascended, we are still left in as disconsolate a Case as ever. We can have no Comfort from this Promise or Assertion if it be

be not verify'd : for if it be not verify'd by this time, to be sure it will never be so at all. We are therefore to consider that as Christ did here assure them that he was going to ascend, so he did actually ascend to his and their God and Father. And this will appear from three Things.

1. He was actually seen to ascend up into Heaven by those who are unquestionable Witnesses of the Truth of it. He led out his Apostles as far as *Bethany*, on purpose that they might behold it. Here he bless'd 'em in a very solemn but endearing manner ; *and while he was blessing 'em he was carry'd up into Heaven, Luke 24. 50, 51.* Nay, they saw him go up too some part of the way to his heavenly Kingdom ; for *while they beheld he was taken up, though at last a Cloud receiv'd him out of their sight, Acts 1. 9.* Nay it is said there, that while they were looking after him, two Angels asked them why they *stood gazing up into Heaven?* and told 'em that they might depend upon it, he would come down again *in like manner as they had seen him go into Heaven.* These Apostles were admitted thus to behold the Ascension of our Lord, that they might testify it to the World. That was their very Office, their Work and Business, to be Witnesses that Christ was risen and ascended. And surely they are Witnesses fit to be believ'd. They were prudent and understanding Persons, they were excellent in their Lives and Conversations, and not likely to tell Lies to deceive

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deceive us. They were more than one, two, or three, that might be deceived; they were many and yet all agree in the Truth of it. And they had no worldly Interest to serve by imposing on us; for they knew they should, and actually did lose their Lives by bearing Witness to it. If such Evidence as this be rejected, none is like to prevail upon us.

2. He has given sensible Evidence of his being in the upper World since he ascended up thither. Two Persons we have recorded in the New Testament that had sensible Evidence of his being there. One is the Apostle Paul, who, when he was going to *Damascus*, was stop'd by a glorious Light, and that was follow'd by a Voice from Heaven, which Voice was the Voice of Christ; *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* Acts 9. 5. The other was Stephen, the first Martyr for the Cause of Christ: It is said that he *looked stedfastly into Heaven, and saw the Glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right-hand of God*, Acts 7. 55. So that here is not only the Evidence of Sense as to his ascending, but as to his being ascended, or safely arriv'd at the blessed World.

3. He has prov'd it by the Consequences and Effects of it. Such wonderful things have ensu'd since the time we are told he went up to the heavenly State, as do effectually satisfy us that he really did ascend. How many Miracles have been perform'd by a Power deriv'd from him? How plentiful an Effusion was there

there of the Holy-Ghost but twelve Days after his Ascension? Before this he was not given; not in so compleat a measure: and the Reason was, because Jesus was not yet glorified, *Job. 7. 39.* But now as soon as he was glorified, he pour'd him out in the most remarkable manner. So that in this Case it was as in the Coronation of an earthly King; Princes do then scatter their Medals, and diffuse their Bounties plentifully among their Subjects. And thus did Jesus, the King of the Church, when he was crown'd with Honour and Glory; not only *led Captivity captive*, but *gave gifts unto Men*, *Ephes. 4. 8.* We read that on the Day of Pentecost there were 3000 Souls converted. And after this, How swift a Progress did the Gospel make, till in a little while almost the whole World was enlight'ned with the Knowledge of Christ? And what does the Spirit do but continue to descend from Heaven upon the Souls of Men to this very Day? For, blessed be God, though the World is dismally corrupted, yet it is not utterly forsaken. Nay, What does that Spirit do whenever he comes into any Soul? Why, he teaches that Soul to live above the World, to despise the Pleasures, and the Charms, and the Terrors of it: Though they are never so powerful upon other Men, yet they can do little upon such a Soul. He teaches it to cut off its Right-hand, rather than sin against God: He helps it to condemn and defy even Death it self, and makes it to live the Life of Heaven while surrounded with innumerable

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Temptations. Surely all this shews that Christ is at the Right-hand of his God and Father, or else he could never send such a Spirit upon his Followers. No! but as *Elijah* drop'd his Mantle, and left a double Portion of his Spirit upon *Elisha* when he went up in the fiery Chariot; so our Lord was carry'd to Heaven, and thence lets fall the Drops, I should rather say, the Showers of his Gifts and Graces, upon the Souls of his People.

4. I am now, lastly, to shew how comfortable a Consideration this is, that Christ has ascended to his Father and to our Father, to his God and to our God. Now this is Matter of Comfort to Believers upon several Accounts: as,

1. Is he gone up to his Father and our Father? &c. Then he is gone to one who is able to answer all the Requests that he puts up to him. He is now ascended to the heavenly World: And what is he ascended to do? 'Tis not only to take Possession of his own Glory, not only to be happy himself; but 'tis to intercede for us, to pray that we also may at last be with him to behold his Glory; 'tis, in short, to make Intercession for us, that we may be pardon'd, sanctify'd, succour'd, and supported, and kept by almighty Grace thro' Faith unto Salvation. These are mighty Things that he is gone to pray for. But he does not ask them of one who is unable to grant 'em: no! but 'tis of one who can give

all that ever he desires of him: for he is a God both to him and us; an all-sufficient Being, able to do every thing that we can stand in need of. Surely this is a strong Consolation. 'Tis a Comfort, that in all our Prayers we pray to a God that can do more abundantly for us than we can ask or think. And it may comfort us also to consider that he is not a weak Creature, but an Almighty God that Christ pleads with on our behalf.

2. Is he ascended to his Father? &c. Then he is ascended to one whom he has a prevailing Interest in. He must needs have a powerful Interest in God, because he is his Father. This is the Ground of that Assurance which he expressed while he was in this World: I *know*, says he, *that thou always hearest me*, Joh. 11. 42. I never ask any thing of thee in vain. And what's the Reason of it? Why, he intimates in the Words before, that it was owing to that fatherly Affection which God carry'd towards him: *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me*. To go to a Father is a great Encouragement to a dutiful Child, because he may be suppos'd to have more Interest in him than in another. Christ prays for us to his Father; and he, to be sure, will never deny him. 'Tis true, a wise Father will deny many foolish and pernicious Requests from his most beloved Children. But Christ has no Requests which are unwise or hurtful: they are all directed by infinite Wisdom and infinite Love; by a Regard to the Honour of God, and the

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real Interest of our Souls. And an infinitely wise Father will not deny such Requests as these.

3. Is he ascended to his Father? &c. Then he is ascended to one who is inclined to hear him by his Affection to us. He has the same Relation to us that he has to Christ; accordingly he has the same Affection to us that he has to him: the same for the Kindness, not for the Degree of it: *That the World may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me, John 17. 23.* Nay, it is not only a general Love which God has for those that Christ prays for, but it is the Love of a Father; a most tender, a most endearing Kindness. An affectionate Love! which will be ready to give whatever is fit to be vouchsaf'd. His Love is so great, that the only Reason why he denies us any thing, is because he loves us. He would not really love us if he gave us many a thing that we foolishly ask of him. Well! this is a comfortable Thought then, Christ prays for the greatest Blessings in the World for true Believers. He asks 'em not of their Enemy, that would be sure to deny 'em; but of their Father, who for that Reason will be ready to grant them.

4. Is he gone to his Father? &c. Then he is gone to one who is engag'd by virtue of his Blood and Purchase, to grant the Blessings he desires for us. For, How is he the God and Father of Christ and Believers? That which

procur'd this Relation, was his Obedience unto Death. He had forfeited it entirely if he had not dy'd. His own Interest and ours too is ground'd upon it: *Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my Life that I may take it again,* John 10. 17. And 'tis plain that his Love to us is wholly owing to the Sacrifice of the Cross. In a word, there is not one Blessing a Believer needs, but Christ has paid a valuable Price for it. So that he is gone to a God with whom he can plead with great Authority. He can say, Father, I will that it be so and so: I have deserv'd it for 'em, and therefore thou art righteous and just to forgive and save 'em.

5. Is he ascended to his Father? &c. Then he is gone to one who is engag'd by Covenant to hear him on our behalf. I have shew'd you that God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ by a Covenant struck up between them: A Covenant wherein he promis'd, that he should see his Seed, and that the Blessing of the Lord should be upon him; that the Work of the Lord should prosper in his hand, and that he should see of the Travail of his Soul and be satisfied. So that whatever is necessary towards Christ's full Satisfaction, and seeing the Ends of his Mediatorial Undertaking, is promis'd him by God. And I have shewn you that he is our God also by Covenant: *I will be their God, and they shall be my People.* Now this Covenant denotes a Promise of all needful Favours and Enjoyments.

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So that Christ is ascended to plead not for uncertain Mercies, but for such as God has engag'd to vouchsafe to us. And certainly then you need not question but he will obtain them.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

1. From what I have now discours'd concerning God's being the God and Father of Believers, I infer, that great is the Privilege of such Persons above any other Persons in the World: None but they can call him their God and Father, except it be upon a common Account as he is their Creator. And certainly it must be a vast Advantage to have a God to be our Father: We cannot then want any good thing; but Grace and Glory, and all that's needful for our Support and Comfort, and eternal Blessedness, is secur'd to us. A Father will provide for his Children if he be not a Monster; and when it is a God that is that Father, he will provide whatever they can stand in need of.

2. I infer from the same Particulars also, that Distrust of God is peculiarly sinful in good Men: For they have greater reason to trust him, because he is their God and Father. Yet how full of Distrust is many a good Man? Sometimes they distrust God as to the Pardon of their Sins: Sometimes they suspect he will deny them that Assistance, without which they shall one day perish by their spiritual Adversary: nay, others who can trust God with

their Souls, yet cannot depend upon him for the Trifles of this World: They can trust him for Eternity, but they cannot trust him for twenty or thirty Years. How unaccountable is this! as if God was less kind to his Children than Men; or as if he could be a God to us, and not freely give us all things.

3. Let us consider this in all the Afflictions we meet with from the hands of God. You are tempted perhaps to think it hard to be so much afflicted, and to murmur because you are so. Such Thoughts should be speedily stop'd: and one of the most effectual ways of stopping them is this; Remember, he that is now afflicting you is your God and Father. Surely your own God, your heavenly Father, will not afflict you any more than needs; and will you be angry at your Father for correcting of you?

4. Consider it also in the Duties you perform towards the blessed God. 'Tis a great Encouragement in Prayer, to think you pray to one that is in Covenant with you; one that is more nearly related to you than the dearest Father in the whole World. And therefore our Saviour wisely directs the Beginning of his Prayer to be by calling upon God as our Father; *Our Father which art in Heaven.* And so in the Sacrament; 'tis very suitable to think that we are going to converse with God as our God. There we are to ratify our former Covenant with God: There

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There we are invited to sit down with him as his Friends: There, as a Father, he provides a Supper, a spiritual Meal for the Nourishment and Support of our Souls: And there we see how he came to be our God and Father; viz. in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, who is set forth crucified before our eyes. So that this is a proper Thought to be entertain'd in the Worship of God, and in all those religious Duties we perform towards Him.

5. From what we have discours'd concerning the Ascension of our Blessed Lord, and how comfortable a Thought it is, that he is *ascended to his and our God and Father*; I would beg you to take the Comfort of it to your own Souls. If you are true Believers you may safely do it: If you are not, indeed you can have little Satisfaction in it; for he is then ascended to your Enemy. But if you are, you may apply it to your selves, though perhaps you may be but weak in Grace: nay, it is your Duty to take the Comfort of these Considerations, as much as it is your Duty to rejoice in the Lord, which you are commanded to do. So that you are guilty of a sinful Omission, if you are never delightfully affected with these Comforts of God, which are not small.

6. From the same Considerations, let us, lastly, be perswaded to let our own Affections also ascend to the heavenly State and Place. Christ is personally ascended, let us ascend spiritu-

spiritually: He is ascended in his Body, let us follow him in our Hearts and Souls. This is the Inference the Apostle draws from it, *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth, &c. Set your Affections upon things above, Colof. 3. 1, 2.* In a word, Let us so ascend in our Affections to Heaven, that our Conversation may be in Heaven also; and then we shall at last personally ascend as our Saviour has done before us, to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God.

SER-

S E R M O N V I I I .

A

Sacramental Sermon

On L U K E XIV. 22.

*And the Servant said, Lord it is done
as thou hast commanded, and yet
there is room.*

OUR Blessed Saviour, who thoroughly understood the Nature of Man, and the way of affecting or working upon it, was wont to discourse to his Hearers by Parables, which are Representations of spiritual by sensible Things: And these Words are a part of one of those Parables, containing a remarkable Circumstance which is full of Encouragement to poor Sinners to come and partake of the plentiful Entertainment which Christ has provided. The original Design of the Parable is, to treat of the Rejection of the Jews for their Contempt of Christ, and the Reception of the Gentiles into their room. But it is also very instructive in

in a more comprehensive Sense; partly to shew the miserable Excuses which Men are apt to make for their Contempt of Christ; and partly to describe the Freeness and Extensiveness of that Salvation which he has provided for us. You have here a melancholy Account how ready Men are to make Excuses when they are call'd to take care of their immortal Souls. It is said concerning those that were invited, that *they all with one consent began to make Excuse*. Nay, we are told in this Parable, what a slender Account the Generality of Persons can give of the Reasons why the Gospel is thus strangely rejected by them. They are all of 'em taken from the Employments and Pleasures of this Life, as if the Concerns of Time were of far greater Regard to most Persons than the Affairs of a vast Eternity. The next thing observable in the Parable is, the Freeness and Extensiveness of the Grace of Christ in the Invitations of a Gospel. When those who were first invited had excus'd themselves, *i. e.* positively refus'd, what does the Master of the Feast do? Why, he commands his Servant to go and invite whoever he met with, tho' the most contemptible Persons in the World: *He should go into the Streets and Lanes of the City, and bring in the Poor, and the Maim'd, the Halt, and the Blind.* Gospel-Advantages are not confined to the great and rich Men of the World; but whoever will, may come and drink of the Waters of Life freely. Now upon this we are told, in the Words of my Text, that the Servant came

came and reported to his Lord, that he had invited all that he could meet with, and yet there was room for more. *He said, Lord it is done, &c.*

In which Words you may take notice of three Things:

I. The Character given of the Person employ'd in calling others to the Feast mention'd in this Parable; he is call'd a *Servant*.

II. The Account which this Servant gave of his Carriage when he return'd to his Lord; *Lord, it's done as thou hast commanded.*

III. The Consequence of what he had done in Obedience to Christ: Some Persons came readily to the Feast, but still *there was room* for more.

Now according to this Division of the Words, I shall raise three Observations, the last of which I shall chiefly insist upon.

I. That those who are sent out to invite Souls to the spiritual Feast which Christ has provided, are the Servants of Christ: *And the Servant said.* By this is represented the Ministers of the Gospel, who are the Persons that Christ employs to call Sinners to his spiritual Supper. These are the *Servants* of Christ. They are but Servants; and therefore they are to make the Will of Christ, who is their Lord

Lord and Master, the Rule of their Actions. They are but Servants, therefore they cannot expect a more honourable Treatment than their Master himself had when he was in this World. They are but Servants, therefore they are not to Lord it over the Flock of Christ; 'tis he alone is to act as its Head and Governour. Again, they are but Servants, and therefore the Honour of their Lord should be their Design and End. And as they are Servants, they are oblig'd to be diligent and faithful. But then they are the Servants of Christ, which denotes the Honour of their Work and Office. If it be honourable to be but a Servant to an earthly King, much more to be a Servant of Christ, who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

2. That a true Servant of Christ, or Minister of the Gospel, endeavours to follow the Command of Christ, and makes that his principal Rule and Measure: *Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded.* A good Servant does not act by his own, but his Master's Will: And a good Minister does not consult his Humour, Interest, or his Corruptions, but the Command of God. This he does both in his Conversation and Preaching: as to the one he cries, Lord, what would'st thou have me to do? and as to the other, Lord, what would'st thou have me to say?

3. That though there are many Souls who have already come in to the Entertainments of

of a Gospel, yet there is still room for more, even for all that are willing to come and partake of them.

In speaking to this Observation, I shall only shew you the Truth of it, that there is room for all that will come in to the plentiful Entertainment which God in the Gospel has provided. And this I shall do by considering it in respect of these following things.

1. In respect of the Covenant of Grace.
2. In respect of the Church of Christ.
3. In respect of the Mercy of God.
4. In respect of the Merits of the Redeemer.
5. In respect of the Grace of Christ.
6. In respect of the Happiness of another World.

In all these Respects there is room for more to come in and partake of the Benefits of the Gospel.

1. In respect of the Covenant of Grace. This is the comprehensive Benefit which the Gospel contains in it; and does carry in it both all the Duties we are to perform towards God, and all the Blessings we are to expect from him. It is that which the principal Supports of religious Persons are derived from, and that which their greatest Hopes and Desires are terminated upon, according to that of the Psalmist: *Although my House be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and*
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this is all my Salvation and all my Desire, 2 Sam. 23. 5. I shall not trouble you with a large Account of the Nature of this Covenant; you have it briefly, but most comprehensively summed up in that Expression, I will be their God, and they shall be my People, 2 Cor. 6. 16. That which I am chiefly concern'd to shew at present is, that none have Reason to be discourag'd as if there were not room for them in this gracious Covenant, but though Millions of Souls have already come in to it, yet there is room for more. And this will appear if you consider these following Things.

1. The Author of this Covenant. The Author of the Covenant of Grace is the merciful God. And what are we told concerning this God? Why, we are told that *he delighteth not in the Death of a Sinner, Ezek. 33. 11. His tender Mercies are over all his Works, Psal. 14. 9. Nay, he would have all Men to be saved, and is willing that all should come to the Knowledge of the Truth, 1 Tim. 9. 4.* Now if this be the Nature of that God who framed this Covenant of Grace, we cannot think he has excluded any from the Blessings of it, any but such as exclude themselves. For this would be to establish a Covenant that were directly contrary to his own Nature.

2. The Persons that it is made with. It is made with fallen Man, in order to his Recovery and Salvation. I know there has been a Controversy about the Fœderating Parties, whether

whether they are God and Christ, or the Blessed God and a sinful apostate World. But a small Distinction or two will soon put an end to this Dispute. We may say that the Covenant was made with the Lord Jesus, if we consider him as a publick Person, or as the Head of the People of God: but 'tis evident that it was not made with him so as to exclude Mankind; for 'tis they who are to perform the Duties of it: they and every one of 'em are to repent, and believe, and obey the Gospel. And 'tis they who are to be pardon'd, and sanctify'd, and eternally sav'd; which are the Blessings of this Covenant: nay all are capable of these Blessings; so that this is a universal Covenant, and therefore there is room in it for universal Mankind to come and partake of it.

3. The Duration of it. It is said to be an everlasting Covenant. 'Tis like the Covenant of Day and Night, which shall not cease. 'Twill last to the End of this World. And if it will last as long as this World does, then there must be room for future Believers to be admitted into it. The Covenant will be everlasting, as to the Effects of it, as it will issue in the eternal Salvation of all the Faithful. But it is also everlasting or perpetual, as that Word does frequently signify in reference to its being continually offer'd to fallen Man. Now an Offer from God being always sincere, this must suppose the Possibility of our coming to the Covenant thus offer'd: nay, this is not
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only possible, but some will actually be brought into it. God will never be without a People, a Church that shall be in Covenant with him as long as the World lasts; as is evidently imply'd in that Promise, that *the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

4. The Manner how we are invited into it; and that is in the most comprehensive one. For so it is said, *Come unto me all that are weary and heavy-laden, and ye shall find rest for your Souls, Matt. 11. 28. Ho every one that thirsteth, let him come and buy Wine and Milk, without Money and without Price, Isa. 55. 1.* The Blessings of the Covenant are offer'd to all that will perform the Duties of it: so that there is yet room for every Soul that is but ready to come by Faith and Repentance to God and Christ. The Scripture assures us, that there is no respect of Persons with God: no! but in every Nation, he that serveth him and doth Righteousness is accepted of him. And he judgeth according to every Man's Works. It is not the Person, but the Work, the Qualification of the Person, that he regards. And whoever is thus duly dispos'd, is invited to partake of Covenant-Blessings. Surely then if ever we are excluded, it must be because we exclude our selves.

5. The Reason and Design of God's appointing it; which was, to glorify his Grace and Goodness in the Pardon, the Justification, and Salvation of Souls. It is a Covenant of
Grace

The Eighth Sermon.

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Grace for this Reason, because God does by it discover his wonderful Grace to a lost World. And because, in order to do so, he has made the Terms of it the most gracious and easy. All this is, that we might be *to the praise of the glory of his Grace, whereby he doth make us accepted in the beloved*, Eph. 1. 6. Now this being the Design of God in appointing this Covenant, we can't think he has made it so narrow as to exclude those that are willing to come into it. 'Tis most for the Glory of his Free-grace to enlarge it, that all may come who have Hearts inclined and dispos'd to it.

2. In respect of the Church of Christ. The Church is the School wherein we are prepar'd and train'd up for Heaven. This is the House of God; and he has so contriv'd it, that it has room to receive all that will but knock at the Door with Resolutions to be admitted. I own that those are not to be received as Members of the Church, they are not to be treated as Parts of the Family of God, who do visibly and commonly contradict the Rules of it. But those who will comply with the Laws of this Household of Faith, cannot be deny'd a place in it. Under the Old Testament this House was exceeding narrow; the Jews were almost all the People that belong'd to it. But the Wall of Separation is now broken down; so that there is room for all the Nations of the Earth to come into this living Temple. From all which you may see these two Things.

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1. That

1. That there is room for every Nation to be admitted into the Church of Christ. So the Prophecy concerning the Son of God foretold that *in him should all the Nations of the World be bless'd*, Gen. 12. 3. And so the Commission which our Lord gave to the Apostles, directed them to *go and preach the Gospel to every Creature*, Mark 16. 15. and to *Disciple all Nations, baptizing them*, Mat. 28. 19. And soon after his Ascension it was expressly declared by the infallible Spirit, that now God *had granted to the Gentiles, Repentance unto Life*, Acts 11. 18. In a word, Christ is now King of Nations as well as King of Saints, and the Kingdoms of this World are become the Kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ; so that he shall reign for ever and ever. And therefore if there are some Nations which are not yet brought into the Church of Christ, it is not owing to any Unwillingness in God to admit them. It is to be attributed either to the Neglect of those who while they enjoy the Gospel themselves will be at no pains to transmit it to others, or else to their Refusal of it when it has been offer'd them.

2. That there is room for all of every Nation, that will follow the Laws which the Head of this Church has oblig'd them to be govern'd by. The Church of Christ is either Visible or Invisible. As to the Invisible Church, all that truly believe will have room for their Souls: for *whosoever cometh to me*, says our Lord, *I will in no wise cast out*. The Visible Church

Church hath different Ordinances belonging to it: There are the Sacraments of it, from which scandalous Sinners are to be excluded, but no others: *With such we are not to eat,* 1 Cor. 5. 11. But all that have examin'd themselves, and found they are sincere, are *to eat of this Bread, and drink of this Cup,* 1 Cor. 11. 28. And then there are the more common Ordinances of Praying, Hearing, &c. and these, even the worst of Sinners are invited to join in for their Conversion and Salvation; for *how can they believe on him of whom they have not heard?* It is their Duty to believe, nay they'll be condemn'd hereafter for not believing: and then if Faith comes by Hearing, the Opportunity to do so must in Justice lie open to him.

3. In respect of the Mercy of God. It is with respect to this, that many are afraid there is no room for them. What, Can such a provoking Sinner as I, be receiv'd to Mercy? Is there any Place in the Favour of God for such a one as has trampled upon the very Bowels of divine Goodness? Yes, O Sinner, there is room for thee in the Mercy of God, if thou wilt come by Repentance to it. 'Tis true there is no room, even in infinite Mercy, for those that resolve to live and die in their Sins. But for all that truly repent and believe, the divine Mercy is large enough to receive 'em though they are never so many. For,

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I. God

1. God is able to forgive them. He can pardon ten thousand Talents; we can never doubt of it, because his Mercy is unlimited; it is the Mercy of an infinite God, one whose *Thoughts are not as our Thoughts, nor his Ways as our Ways; but as high as the Heavens are above the Earth, so far are his Thoughts and Ways above ours*, Isa. 55. 8, 9. There is one Sin which can never be forgiven; but that is not because God is not able to pardon it, but because it is not fit to be forgiven: 'tis a Sin against the only Remedy provided for the Disease of the Soul. So that infinite Mercy can pass over all the Mountains of Difficulty that lie in the way of thy Pardon and Acceptance: And if there be any Sin which it does not forgive, it is not because it cannot, but because it does not think fit to pardon it.

2. God is ready to forgive them. He has declar'd that he will do it; that *all Sin and Blasphemy* but that against the Holy-Ghost, *shall be forgiven*, Mat. 12. 31. and that *though our Sins are as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow; and though they are as Crimson, they shall become as Wool*, Isa. 1. 18. He is rich in Mercy, and ready to forgive: So that here is room actually provided and promis'd to every returning Soul. They may come to this merciful God, for *now all things are ready*, Mat. 22. 4. All the Mercy they can stand in need of is actually prepar'd and made ready for their Pardon and Acceptance.

APPLI-

APPLICATION.

1. To those who do not come to the Table of the Lord. Why should you keep off from this blessed Ordinance? Is there not room even for you, if you will but come to it? Perhaps you'll say, you are not in Covenant with God, and you are not pardon'd by God. But there is room both in the Covenant and Mercy of God: and therefore 'tis your Fault if you are not accepted. And as there is room in the Covenant and Mercy of God, so there is in the Church too; and therefore you certainly exclude your selves.

2. To those that do come to this blessed Ordinance. See that you come in Faith, and then you may be encourag'd, for you are certainly welcome. You are welcome to God, and you are welcome to the Church of God; for there is room provided on purpose for you. The Neglecters of this spiritual Supper are greatly to blame, and must be suppos'd guilty of a wilful Sin. God does not exclude 'em from it; for he commands 'em to come. The Ministers of God do not exclude 'em, the People of God do not exclude 'em, they are only excluded by their own Unwillingness, for all other things are ready. Those that do come, are to blame if they come not with a comfortable and a lively Frame; for Heaven and Earth, God and his People, do bid them welcome.

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3. To

3. To all that labour under a sense of their Sins. Be not discourag'd, as such Persons frequently are; for there is room to receive you though your Sins are never so great or many. Take heed of resting in Conviction only, but go speedily to God through his own Son, and he will certainly find a place to receive you. He'll receive you into his Mercy to forgive you. He'll receive you into his Covenant to bless you with spiritual Blessings in heavenly things. He'll receive you into his Church to own you for his People in this World: and then at last he'll receive you to Heaven, to make you eternally happy in the World to come.

SERMON IX.

A

Sacramental Sermon

ON LUKE XIV. 22.

*And the Servant said, Lord it is done
as thou hast commanded, and yet
there is room.*

WE are shewing from these Words,
that there is room for all that are
willing to partake of the Benefits
of the Gospel. And having confi-
der'd it in three Respects already, come we
now to consider the same Truth,

4. In respect of the Merits of the Redeemer.
These are so extensive, that none need to de-
spair if they will but come to this meritorious
Saviour. 'Tis true, we are told that *if we be-
lieve not that Christ is he, we shall die in our Sins,*
John 8. 24. Their Case is certainly most
dreadful who will not come unto him that
they may have Life; for they are in the State
of

of Apostates from the blessed God, who out of Christ is a consuming Fire. But art thou willing, O Soul, to come to this Jesus in the way of Believing? Dost thou accept of him for thy Prince and Saviour? Thou may'st safely depend upon it, that there is room for thee to be justify'd and sav'd by him. Here consider two things:

1. There is room, because this Merit is all-sufficient; able to purchase eternal Salvation for all Comers. 'Tis sufficient even for a thousand Worlds: for it is the Merit of that Person who is *God over all blessed for ever*, Rom. 9. 5. 'Tis not the Merit of a Sinner; for then it could deserve nothing but Hell and Damnation. 'Tis not the Merit of a meer Man; for then it could deserve nothing for any but for himself alone. Nay it is not the Merit of an Angel; it could then be only of a finite Worth and Excellency. No! it is the Merit of him who is the Lord of Angels; *In whom it pleas'd the Father that all Fulness should dwell, and in whom dwelleth all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily*, Col. 1. 19. 2. 9. Consider this, and you cannot reasonably doubt but that Christ is able to save you. He could have recovered the very Devils themselves, and much more can he restore the World of Apostate Men.

2. There is also room, because this Merit does properly belong to every true Believer. The bare Consideration that Christ has a Fulness of Merit in him, will not satisfy a doubting

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ing Soul: for he may, and he is able to merit Salvation for many more than he will eventually save. That which must give full Satisfaction to such a Soul, is, to be assured that this Merit is made over to him. And this is the Case of all that come weary and heavy-laden. He is the Lord their Righteousness, and to them he is made Wisdom and Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption. So that such Persons may say, *All things are ours, because we are Christ's, and Christ is God's*, 1 Cor. 3. 22, 23. It is not the Privilege only of some of the best of Christians; but, Blessed are all they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be fill'd. To conclude this Head, we are told, that Christ is willing to save as many as shall ever come in to him to the End of the World; that *Whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out*, John 6. 37. And as he is willing, so he is also capable of doing it; *Able to save to the uttermost, eis to παντελες*, to the full, in the most perfect manner, *all that come unto God by him*, Heb. 7. 25. The whole World of Sinners may come and lay their Iniquities upon him; for he fainteth not, neither is weary, but he hath born the Iniquities of us all.

5. In respect of the Grace of Christ. This is another Cause of the Doubts of many a poor Sinner. I cannot, says such a Soul, be converted, I cannot be preserv'd in the way of Holiness, I cannot be prepared for Heaven, without the Grace of Christ. And tho' thou-

thousands of others have obtain'd this saving Grace, yet I may never be a Partaker of it. But to this I answer, that there is room in the Fulness of the Grace of Christ as well as of the Merit of Christ. For,

1. This Grace is purchas'd for all that do not slight and reject it. That it is purchas'd by Christ, will appear from the Authority with which he conveys it to the Souls of Men. With what Authority does he speak when he says concerning the Comforter, *i. e.* the Spirit, *whom I will send from the Father*, Joh. 15. 26? But the Authority he has from God is the Fruit of his Sufferings. And accordingly you may observe, that upon his Ascension to Heaven it is said, that *he gave Gifts unto Men*, *i. e.* sent down the Spirit, who was one of the greatest Gifts that could be given to this World, *Eph.* 4. 8. But now his Ascension, together with the Consequences of it, were the Fruits of his Obedience unto Death. And then this Grace is purchas'd for all that do not reject it. For this is the great Qualification for the Benefit Christ has provided for us, to be heartily willing to partake of 'em.

2. It is promised to all that desire it at the hands of God. He will give Grace and Glory, and no good thing will he with-hold. But who are the Persons that he will give it to? Why, *He will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him*, Luke 11. 13. Those that do not ask for the Grace of Christ cannot be suppos'd to be

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be truly desirous of it: and so there is no room for the Backward and Unwilling. But if thou ask it in a deep sense of thy need of it, with a Soul wishing to be assisted by it, a merciful God will never deny thee, much less will a God who has oblig'd himself by a solemn Promise. In this case we may appeal both to his Justice and Faithfulness for all necessary Grace, they both standing engag'd for the Fulfilment of those Promises which God makes to his Creatures: and what greater Security can we desire?

3. None shall ever be lost meerly for the want of any necessary Grace on the part of Christ. There are many that daily perish because they have not the Grace of God in 'em. But then they have not that necessary Grace, because they do not pray for it, or because they quench it, and resist it, and do despight unto it. God does never deny his Spirit unto any but those who render themselves unfit to partake of it. And this is the Cause of their eternal Destruction: 'Tis not for want of the Mercy and Grace of God, but for want of their Compliance with it. Hence the Scripture declares, that Mens Destruction is of themselves; that the Spirit of God does not continue to strive with them, because they grieve him, and do despight to him; and that when he gives them up to a reprobate Mind, it is with the greatest Reluctancy and Unwillingness.

4. This

4. This Grace will be sufficient for us. We shall not go without Grace if we sincerely ask it: And when we have it, we shall find that it will be enough to sanctify and save us. *My Grace*, says Christ to his Apostle, and the same he may be suppos'd to say to every Believer, *shall be sufficient for thee*, 2 Cor. 12. 9. Nay, it is such Grace, that *we can do all things through Christ strengthening us with it*, Philip. 4. 13.

From all this I think it is most evident, that there is Room in the Fulness of the Grace of Christ; so that none can perish meerly for the Want, but Men are undone by their Abuse of it: either they wilfully refuse it when offer'd, or quench it by acting contrary to its Dictates and Directions; and then they justly perish in their own Folly.

6. In respect of the Happiness of another World. There is room in Heaven for the Entertainment of as many Guests as shall be prepar'd. Not that all that wish to be happy shall be admitted into it: there must be a certain Disposition of Soul, a holy Temper, and Frame of Heart. This is denoted by the having Oyl in our Vessels; for want of which, the Parable tells us, the Door will be shut against us, *Matt. 25. 10.* And we may infer the same from the Wisdom of God, nay from the very Nature of Things: for an infinitely wise God will never confer Salvation upon those that are not fit to enjoy it. But an unholy Person is utterly unfit for Heaven, which

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is a State of perfect Purity and Holiness. Take this therefore for a certain Caution, that there is no room in the heavenly State for an un-sanctify'd Sinner. But art thou renewed in the Spirit of thy Mind? Are thy Affections set upon things above? Is there a real Change to be found upon thy Spirit? Thou wilt assuredly find, that as soon as thou leavest thy Place in this World, there will be room for thee in a better. There are four Considerations which may convince us of this.

1. The Gate that leads to the heavenly World is wide enough for every Person that is heartily prepared to enter at it. Our Saviour tells us, that *strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way, that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it*, Mat. 7. 14. But the Reason of this he tells us is, because many do only seek to enter; they do not strive, and therefore they are not able, Luke 13. 24. The Gate is certainly so wide, that whoever will strive shall find it open to receive 'em. For we are commanded to strive that we may enter. We are directed to seek first the Kingdom of God, in order that we may obtain it. And we are told that *Blessed are they that do his Commandments, i. e. all of 'em, because they have a right to the Tree of Life, and shall enter in through the Gates into the City*, Rev. 22. 14.

2. The Place is large enough to receive us if we are thus prepar'd. Christ tells his Disciples, that he is gone to prepare a place for them. And

And to shew that the Place he prepares is not for a small inconsiderable number of immortal Souls, he assures us, that in his *Father's House* there are many *Mansions*, John 14. 2. The Description which you have of the new *Jerusalem* is also remarkable to this purpose, *Rev. 21. 16. The City is four-square, the Length as large as the Breadth, twelve thousand Furlongs, i. e. as some compute it, fifteen hundred Miles.* This is to denote the Extensiveness of this great City, and that it is able to contain an inconceivable number of Inhabitants to dwell in it. If Heaven be nothing but a State of perfect Felicity, we cannot doubt but it must be receptive of every prepared Person, that holy Temper which prepares for it being it self that very Felicity. But, whether it be a State, or a Place, or both, as this last seems the most probable, it will certainly take in all whose unholy Tempers do not exclude them.

3. The objective Happiness of it is sufficient for the Entertainment of all that can possibly be prepared. For that is the Blessed God, who is infinite in all Perfections. He is the all-sufficient Being, able to make ten thousand Worlds happy in the Enjoyment of him. And therefore we are told, that the Happiness of Heaven is *Fulness of Joy*, *Psal. 16. 11.* Nay, it is said that *they are a great multitude, which no man can number, that are before the Throne of God:* but though they are so many, yet *they do never hunger nor thirst*, they are never dissatisfied nor uneasy, because *the Lamb that sitteth*
upon

upon the Throne feeds them, and leads them to the Fountain of living waters, Rev. 7. 9. 17. The blest God is the Fountain of living Waters, and that such as cannot be drawn dry. They who are admitted to drink of this Fountain, will have their most thirsty Desires and Appetites satisfied.

4. The Inhabitants of the heavenly State will receive all that are like them in Holiness and Purity: They'll gladly admit thee into their Society, if thou art a holy Soul. Thou wilt certainly find a joyful Welcome whoever thou art, tho' thou wast never so despicable in this World. Our Saviour tells us, that *there is Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth*; over every returning Prodigal. And if they rejoice at our Conversion, they'll do so much more at our compleat Salvation. They are the heartiest Lovers of immortal Souls, as appears by their being so ready to minister to them that are the Heirs of Salvation. And this is one considerable part of their Ministry to holy Souls, to conduct them to Heaven at their dying hour. And surely all this is enough to shew, that they'll never vote against the Salvation of any that are fit for Heaven: no! but they'll receive them joyfully, and there will not be one dissenting Voice; for, *Who is he that will condemn them?*

A P P L I C A T I O N.

1. Hence we may infer, That the Loss of so many Souls as do perish in another World, is not owing to God, but must be charg'd upon

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on themselves. Their Destruction certainly lies at their own Door: for God has made sufficient room for every one of 'em; room in the Covenant, room in the Church, room in his forgiving Mercy, room in the Fulness of his own Son, room in his Merit and in his Grace, and room in Heaven on purpose that they might be sav'd. So that it is most evidently true, that you are not straitned in God, but in your own Bowels. 'Tis the Sinner's following his own Inclination, his choosing Death rather than Life, that is his Ruin. He's undone by his own Choice, and because he will not come unto Christ that he may have Life.

2. Hence we may also infer this comfortable Truth, That God is a most unfeigned Lover of immortal Souls. This is one of the most comfortable Truths in the World. We may draw many Considerations from it which will help us against our spiritual Doubts and Fears. If he is so mighty a Lover of thy Soul, then he'll be ready to pardon, and sanctify, and justify it; to support it under, and succour it against its Temptations; and finally, to make it everlastingly happy. Now God must be a hearty Friend to the Souls of Men, or else he would never have made so much room for their Salvation as he has done: he would rather have made the Covenant, and Church, and Heaven, as narrow as possibly he could: nay, he would have shut us out of all of 'em. This he might justly have done upon our first Apostacy; and that he has not done it, is

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owing to the Concern he has for our precious Souls; even to his Unwillingness that they should eternally perish.

3. Let us hence observe the deplorable Case of the Devils and Damn'd in another World. There is room for us that are yet in the Day of Grace, but there is none for them: the Door is now shut upon them, and they are imprison'd in the place of Torment, from whence there will be no Redemption, no room to escape, but there they will be confin'd for ever. For these are the two things which render their Condition so very dismal. First, they are in a state of Darkeness: and secondly in a state of Despair. They are now in a place of Misery, and they'll never find any room to get out of it. How deplorable a Condition must this be? Words can never thoroughly describe it: nay, our very Thoughts cannot reach it, so as to give us an adequate Idea of it. God grant we may never feel it.

4. Let us also be sensible of the Worth of the Day of Salvation, which God has given and still continues to us. It is a most valuable Mercy that ever we had it, and a greater that it is continued so long; because there is room given us by it to make sure of eternal Salvation. But then let us so value it, as to improve it. There is room while this blessed Day is continued, but not a jot of room will be allow'd us after it. And therefore let it never be said concerning us, that God has given us room

and space for Repentance, but we repented not. Nothing will more aggravate our Condemnation, than to be condemn'd for abusing the greatest Patience and Forbearance. The Goodness of God should lead us to Repentance; but if it does not, that which chiefly inclin'd the Blessed God to offer Salvation to us, and is the original Ground of all our Hopes of it, will plead most earnestly against it.

5. Let me apply this to such as come to the Table of the Lord. Those that do not come to it, are mightily to blame; for there is room for 'em if they would come and fill it. The Church is empty enough; so that they cannot say, there is not a Place for 'em. Those that do come may be comforted with this, they will have a Place in the Favour of God as well as in the Church of God. You have room in the Mercy and Acceptance of the King that sits at this holy Table; And as you have room in his Church, and favour in this World, so you will find a Place in his Kingdom hereafter. There is room in Heaven for your better Entertainment than ever you have here; tho' at his Table you can often say, *His Banner over you is Love*. 'Tis your Privilege that you are admitted to feast with your Redeemer, tho' it be seldom and for a few moments: But it will be much more pleasant to drink new Wine with him in his Father's Kingdom. And this is that which you are now call'd to think and hope, and prepare for.

6. This may be applied to those who are willing to come in to Christ, tho' at the latest Hour. Have you spent the greatest part of your Life in Sin? Are you grown old in sinning against God? This perhaps may frighten and discourage you: But let me tell you, for your Comfort, there is room for the oldest Sinner that hears me this Day. You shall not be excluded because you have been great or old Sinners, but because you are impenitent Sinners. Lay aside therefore your Impenitence in Sin, and you may be assured God will make room for you. Nay, if this should ever be your Case, which God forbid, that you should never repent till a dying Hour, yet there would be room even then for you in the Mercy of God. Here I must seriously tell you, that it is a most dangerous thing to defer your Repentance to a Death-bed. You may not have time to repent at such an Hour, or you may not have your Thoughts clear enough to look up to God by a saving Repentance, or God may deny you his Grace which you have long resisted, without which you can never repent at all. But should you heartily repent then, I say, you will find room in the Breast of God. The penitent Thief did so, and so also may you. Here also I must say, that the Case of the Thief upon the Cross had something extraordinary in it. We do not find that he had ever heard of a Christ before his Crucifixion; nor can we be sure that he did not repent in the time of his Imprisonment: and Christ being now making Satisfaction for

Sin, it was proper now to give an Instance of his Power to forgive it. These and such like Considerations shew, how little Encouragement this Instance can afford to such as wilfully delay their Repentance to a dying Hour. However, thus far I think we may argue from it, that when such a late Repentance is, like that of the Thief, real and sincere, it will with his also be accepted of God.

7. Let us endeavour to fill up the room which God and Christ have provided for us. 'Tis pity that so much room should be provided by God, and yet never be fill'd. Blessed be God that some Souls do thankfully come in: But, O that more would hearken to the Invitation which is made them to come to the Feast of the Gospel. May none of us be guilty of neglecting and making light of it. Let us come in and fill up the room that is appointed for us, by Reconciliation to God, by Repentance from dead Works, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And thus, Let us continue in the Love of God here, till we shall be admitted into the Mansions which are in our Father's House in the World to come.

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SERMON X.

GEN. XXIV. 63.

*And Isaac went out to meditate in the
Field at the Even-tide.*

IN which Passage we have a very necessary but a much neglected Duty recommended to us. And for those two Reasons I have chosen this for my Text at this time, because it calls us to a Duty which is very necessary, and because it calls us to a Duty which I am afraid is but seldom practis'd as it ought to be. This you see is the Duty of Religious Meditation; which is recommended to us by the Example of one of the best Persons who liv'd in one of the best Ages of the World, as the Patriarchal one must be confess'd to be.

But here you'll ask me, What if an *Isaac* went out to meditate in the Evening-tide; does it follow, that we are to do so too? Must we do every thing that was done by every good Man whose Name is mention'd in the Book of God? To this I answer, That these Things were written for our Admonition, and

that we through Comfort of the Scriptures might have Hope. And though many Actions of good Men, recorded in the Sacred Writings, are not to be imitated by us ; yet this, I hope, will appear, by what I shall say about it, to be one of those Duties which we ought to imitate them in the Practice of.

Now for a Foundation of what I shall say upon this Duty, I shall lay down this Proposition ;

That religious Meditation is both a necessary and profitable Duty, which we ought to be found in the frequent and conscientious Performance of.

By religious Meditation I understand briefly, A Person's fixing his Thoughts upon something which is of a spiritual nature, in order that he may be affected with it, to the promoting of his Holiness here and Happiness hereafter. Now in treating of this, I shall

I. Shew you that this is a Duty which we ought to be found in the Practice of.

II. Answer some Objections which are commonly made against it.

III. Propound some of the principal Objects for our Meditations to be employ'd about.

IV. Direct you in the Management of this Duty.

V. Shew you the Benefit and Advantages which may attend it. First,

First, Shew you that this is a Duty which we ought to be found in the Practice of. And that it is so, I think will appear to any unprejudic'd Person from these following Considerations :

1. That we have the expresse Command of the Spirit of God to oblige us to it. I suppose, every Person in such an Assembly as this will readily grant me, that that must be a necessary Duty which has the Command of God to enforce it upon us: for what is it but the Will of God that makes any thing to be a Duty? Now there is the Command of God for the Practice of Meditating upon the Concerns of our Souls. It is made the Duty of Ministers to do so: *Meditate upon these things, and give thy self wholly to them, 1 Tim. 4. 15.* And that you may not think it belongs only to them, there is a Direction given to all Persons and Christians in general, to be found in this Practice: *Finally, Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things, Phil. 4. 8.* And so as to Consideration, which is in its general nature the same with this, it is pressed upon all of us, and that by the Authority of the Lord, *i. e.* he who is our Governour, so as to have a Right to command us whatever he pleases: *Now therefore, thus saith the Lord, consider your ways, Hagg. 7. 5.* From all this I may

may infer, that Meditation is thy indispen-
sible Duty, nay that it's a much plainer one
than many others that we believe to be so;
for here is an expresse Command for it, where-
as you can prove several other Duties only by
Consequences at a distance.

2. That we have the Examples of good
Men inviting us to and directing us in it.
Thus you have the Practice of holy *Isaac* in
these Words. And to that I may add the Ex-
ample of a *David* who was very remarkable
for this Practice. He was so accusom'd to it,
that he thought of God *even in the Night-*
watches, Psal. 63. 6. and *when he awak'd he was*
present with him, Psal. 139. 18. If we awake
in the middle of the Night, or when we do so
in the Morning, alas! we presently think up-
on something of the World; but a *David* fix'd
his Thoughts and Meditations upon God as
the Object of 'em. And so he tells us concer-
ning the Law of God; O, *how I love it! It is*
my Meditation all the day, Psal. 119. 97. And
what do you think is meant by Saint *John's*
being *in the Spirit upon the Lord's Day*? Rev. I. 10.
What but this, that he was mightily taken up
in the Meditation of spiritual things? Now
such Examples as these do further enforce this
as thy Duty: not that every thing is so which
has been done by a good Man; for such may
do a great many bad things: but when their
Actions are so many Comments upon the Pre-
cepts of God, when they agree with what he
has laid down as a Law or a Rule of Life,
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they are then to be the matter of our Imitation.

3. That it is one thing which God has a Controversy with his own People about, when they neglect to meditate upon these things. It is a dreadful thing for God to have a Controversy with any Persons; they are certainly in a very dangerous Case. But, now God has never a Controversy against any but for Sin, or for the Neglect of something which was their Duty. If therefore he has such a Controversy for neglecting to meditate, then I infer, that to meditate must be a Duty. And that he has a Controversy against some, nay against his own peculiar People when they do not meditate, is clear from that one place, *The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib, but Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider*, Isa. i. 3. This was the first Charge he brought in against 'em; and how does he complain in it? even that they were more inconsiderate than the very Beasts themselves. What does this shew, but that he was highly displeas'd with 'em?

4. That the Neglect of this Practice implies an Abuse of that thinking Power which God has endued us with. He has given thee, O Christian, a reasonable Soul, whereby thou art distinguish'd from the Beasts that perish. In this Soul there is an Understanding to be employ'd upon higher things than the Objects of Sense: a Beast can think upon them, but thou

thou art capable of contemplating spiritual Objects which they are unacquainted with. And in this respect it is, that Man was made but a little lower than Angels. He can converse with God by Thought and Meditation as well as they, tho' they may have a greater Knowledge of him. In short, it is unreasonable to suppose that God has given me a rational Soul only to employ about Trifles, as all the things of this World comparatively are. And therefore if I don't employ it about a Heaven, and the Concerns of another World, I certainly employ it to a wrong Purpose.

5. That the Neglect of this Practice is a stifling the Principle of Grace if we have it in our Souls. For the very nature of such a Principle, if thou hast it in thee, is to carry thy Soul out towards God and the things of another World. The Pulse of every religious Heart beats towards an eternal Heaven. Its Biass carries it to the Blessed God: for it consists in the Love of him, and in a Conformity to him. So that if you never think upon these things, you act contrary to your Inclination as a religious Person; you stifle the Principle of Grace in you, which would carry you to these blessed Objects.

6. That without Meditation, the Work of Religion can neither be wrought nor maintain'd, as it ought, in us. It cannot be really wrought in us: for how must we be converted from the Love of Sin to the Love of God
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and Holiness? It must be by thinking of the Evil of the one, and the Necessity and Excellency of the other. So that almost every converted Person may say, as the Psalmist did, *My Heart was hot within me, while I was musing the Fire burned*, Psal. 39. 3. It cannot be maintain'd in us without it neither. I appeal to any Christian for the Truth of this, whether it is not by the serious, believing Thoughts of God, that he keeps up his Love to him, and his Trust in him? So that the seldomer he thinks of him, the more do these Graces languish and decline within him? And therefore if it be thy Duty to get a Work of Religion wrought and kept up in thy Soul, then it must be thy Duty to think and meditate upon the things of God.

The Second thing was, to answer some Objections which are commonly made against this Practice; and by which many Persons excuse themselves from the Performance of it. Now there are four Objections which do mightily please some Persons, as if they would really excuse them from the Duty of Meditation.

1. They say, they have not Time nor Opportunity for it: they are involv'd in the Business of this World, so that they can't retire to think upon their God and their immortal Souls. But, dost thou verily believe this will be a sufficient Answer at the great day: Lord, I could seldom or never meditate upon thee,
I had

I had so many things to mind of another nature? No! it will be no more an Answer, than theirs was in the Parable, who would not come to the Feast, because they had a Wife, and a Yoke of Oxen, and a Piece of Land, to take care of, *Luke 14. 18.* I own, that more time ought to be spent in holy Meditation by some than by others; those who have more Leisure and Opportunity for it. But, to say that we have no time for Meditation at all, is the same thing as to say, we have not Leisure to serve God and be sav'd, tho' this is the greatest Business which we have to do in this World.

2. They have not a bodily Constitution which will allow them to meditate upon these things. Now I must say, that I don't believe some melancholy People are obliged to spend so much time in this Duty as others ought: and I don't question but a few short Ejaculations will be accepted from them, when others should be more solemn in it. My Reason is, because God considers our Frame, and remembers so as to make Allowance for our Frailties and Imperfections. But sure there is scarce any Person so weak, as not to be able to think sometimes, what they shall do to be saved: And if they are able, I have already prov'd that it is their Duty.

3. They want those Qualifications which seem to be necessary to the Duty. They cannot tell how to meditate with that Order and
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that Fixedness of Mind which it seems to call for. This is such an Excuse as many Persons in our day make against Praying in their Families. They say, they have not Courage nor Parts to perform it as they desire to do. But I would say to such, Pray but as well as you can, rather than not pray in your Family at all. Make use of the help of some Book, or some set Form, rather than live in the total Neglect of it. And so here, if you can't meditate as well as some others, do it as well as you are able. There needs no such Courage in this as in the former Case, because this is a matter which passes in private betwixt God and your own Souls: none else are to be Witnesses of it; and therefore 'tis not necessary that you should do it in the most exact Method and Order. God will accept thy Heart, while lesser Irregularities shall be overlook'd and forgiven.

4. They complain of the Want of Matter to meditate and reflect upon. Alas! say they, if we sit down to think upon the Things of Eternity, we are at a perfect Loss, and our Thoughts are so barren, that we can't carry on the Exercise for one quarter of an hour as we would be glad to do. Now this, I am afraid, commonly proceeds from some Neglect and Fault in our selves, and therefore ought not to be urg'd as an Excuse for neglecting a plain Duty. I don't deny, but it may sometimes come from natural Temper, bodily Constitution, or the Weakness of a Person's Capacity

Capacity and Understanding: and then I say, as I did before, God will accept of less from thee than he will from most others, if thou art sincere to discharge thy Duty according to thy Ability. But alas! how often is this owing to a sinful Neglect of furnishing thy own Soul with the Knowledge of the things of God? Thou hast not laid up the good Treasure of a sanctify'd Knowledge in thy Heart. Get this, and you can never want Matter to furnish you for fresh Meditation every Day or Hour. But this leads me to the

Third thing; which is, to propound some of the principal Objects for our Meditations to be employed about. And here I might tell you in general, that there is no Creature which God has made, no part of his Creation, but may afford Matter for very useful Thoughts: And he that is well acquainted with this Practice, may find something or other to reflect on wherever he turns his Eyes. But there are some things which are more particularly suited to this Business, more proper Objects for our Meditations to be employed about. I shall mention these which follow:

1. The Perfections, and especially the Omniscience and Omnipresence of God. Sit down and consider how wise, how just, how powerful, how gracious a God you have to deal with. All these Attributes will afford such Thoughts as may either comfort or awaken, either engage you to fear him, or else to love

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love him and depend upon him. In a peculiar manner, be often in the Thoughts of that Presence whereby he fills the Heavens above and the Earth beneath, that all-seeing Eye wherewith he penetrates into the hidden things of Darkness, the most secret Corners of our Soul. This I mention as a peculiar Subject for your Meditations, because it will help to make you watchful over your very Thoughts, and against even the most secret Sins. And I mention it, because 'tis recommended in Scripture as proper to be contemplated by us. See *Dent. 4. 39. Know therefore this day, and consider in thy heart, that the Lord be is God in Heaven above, and upon the Earth beneath; there is none else.* Indeed this cannot but be a most proper Object to meditate on, since it is that Perfection by which God does always think upon us for Good. His Eye is never off from religious Persons, nor really from any others. And if God never forgets you, will you not sometimes think with Reverence and Thankfulness upon him?

2. Another Object for a Christian to meditate upon, is his own Ways, both in the Nature and Tendency of them. This was the matter of the Psalmist's Consideration, and it had an excellent Effect upon him; *I thought on my ways, and turn'd my feet unto thy Testimonies, Psal. 119. 59.* He sat down and consider'd what he had been doing, and what was like to be the Issue of it; whether it tended to Life or Death, to Happiness or Misery. And

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this made him unfeignedly repent of whatever he found amiss in his Conversation. Serious Meditation, O Soul, is thy plain Duty ; and here is one thing thou should'st particularly think upon, even thy past Actions in the World : Think whether they have been agreeable to God's Word, or contrary to it ; and consequently, whether Heaven or Hell is like to be the Effect of 'em in another World. As the meditating upon this may be of great use, so it is also very necessary. If we seldom or never reflect upon our Conversations, we can neither reform them if they are amiss, nor enjoy the Comfort of them if they are never so regular. And upon this account it seems to be a very becoming Method which many have propos'd, and some even of the Heathens themselves practis'd, *viz.* every Morning to call themselves to an impartial Reckoning for the Actions of the Day past, and to consider wherein they had offended, and what Good they had done in it. Let this then be another Object of your Meditation.

3. The Works of God : I mean, his Works of Creation and Providence. And here I might shew you, that there is not a Spire of Grass which we tread upon, not an Ant or a Fly, but will afford serious Thoughts to a considering Person. Thus it is in the Works of Creation : And so it is also in the Works of Providence : All his Transactions from the Beginning of the World to this very Day or Hour. Especially you may consider those
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Providences which you your selves have been more peculiarly concern'd in. As these carry a more immediate Reference to your selves, so they will afford more affecting Considerations to you. And therefore it is a very proper Method which some have taken, to write down the remarkable Passages of their Lives, and those Deliverances and other Providences which they have observ'd relating to themselves. In a word, the Psalmist resolves, that he would *remember God's Wonders of old, and meditate and talk of all his doings.* And in *Jer. 8. 7.* God complains, that *the Stork in the Heavens knoweth her appointed times, and the Turtle, and the Crane, and the Swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my People know not the Judgment of the Lord.* They took no notice of God's Carriage towards 'em; and therein they were worse than the Fowls of the Air, which by a natural Instinct observe the Seasons of their Appearance, Procreation, and the like. This must needs be a very culpable Inconsiderateness: God speaks to us by his Providence as well as by his Word; and surely it is a great Contempt, not to mind or regard a God when he speaks to us.

4. The Mercy of our Redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ. His Coming into the World, his Life in it, his Sufferings and his Resurrection, &c. The Love of God in our Redemption is a mighty Argument to draw forth our Love and Obedience. But it cannot affect one that never thinks at all of it.

And certainly this should be matter of Meditation to us, because the Angels desire to pry into it. And here is plentiful Matter for every Person to reflect upon: Think upon the Condescension of thy Saviour, that he who was the Heir of all things, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, should come down and die, that we might not die for ever. Think upon the Love of the Father in parting with his only Son for our Salvation. Think of the End of it, to make you holy here and happy hereafter. And a thousand other things there are in the Work of our Redemption, which highly deserve your most serious Thoughts. Nay, there is not a Circumstance that belongs to it, but may help to fill us either with the Awe of God, (who perhaps does not appear more terrible in Hell it self, than in the Sufferings he inflicted upon his own Son for our Iniquities) or else with Wonder at his unparalleled Goodness discover'd to us already, or with Dependence upon him for all needful Mercies for the time to come. I will only add, that as this is a proper Object for daily Meditation, so it is more especially needful to be thought on upon Sacramental Occasions, and on the Lord's-day: for these are appointed by Christ himself to be the Memorials of his Love in dying for us.

5. The Word and Gospel of God. This should be the Subject of our Thoughts, because it is to be the Rule of our Practice. How can you practise that which you never study,

study, or are acquainted with? You see that this was the Subject of the Psalmist's most affectionate and frequent Consideration. *I will meditate*, says he, *on thy Precepts*: And, *O how I love thy Law! It is my Meditation all the day*. Thus to Meditate upon the Word of God is the Duty of all Persons, especially after they have been hearing it Preach'd to 'em: for this is necessary to their hearing it with Profit and Advantage. And indeed neither the reading nor hearing the Word are likely to answer their End upon us, if not attended with some degree of Meditation. It will be like Water spilt upon the Ground, which will make but a slight Impression: So that the Word is not only a proper, but necessary Subject of our Consideration, as our hearing or reading that Word will be in vain without it.

6. To name no more, The four last Things are some of the most proper Things which you can meditate and reflect upon. By these I mean Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. We should meditate upon Death, because it is a part of Wisdom to do so. *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!* And it is an excellent Reason which an Heathen || gives, why we should meditate upon this Sub- || *Epictet.*
ject: "Let Death and Banishment, cap. 28.
" *says he*, and every thing which is
" accounted frightful, be daily before thine
" Eyes, but especially Death; and then thou
" wilt never think of any thing that is mean
M 3 " or

“ or unworthy, nor desire any thing with too much Eagerness and Impatience.” And then,

We should meditate upon Judgment, because 'tis necessary to make us diligent in our Preparations for it: And therefore we are directed to consider, *that for all these things God will bring us to Judgment.* We should meditate upon Heaven, because that will encourage us in running the Race which is set before us, convincing us that we shall not run in vain, and that our Labour in the Lord will not be in vain. And we should meditate upon Hell, that we may avoid it. These, in short, are Things of all others of the greatest Importance; and therefore should, of all others, be most in our Thoughts.

Thus I have mention'd some of the most useful Subjects for you and me to meditate upon: But still, I say, whatever is contain'd in the Word or the Works of God, may afford matter for our Meditations; and there is no part of 'em so inconsiderable, but we may reflect upon it with Profit to our Souls.

I shall conclude this Head only with this Inference by way of Exhortation: Let us be found in the Duty which has been recommended to us. You see that it's an indispensable Duty. You see that an *Isaac* could go out to meditate upon another World: Go and do thou likewise. This you'll find one of the best

best Methods to have pleasant Company, even when you have none of the Conversation of this World. *I am not alone*, said our Saviour, *because the Father is with me*. His Company thou may'st always have, if thou wilt seek after it: And his is certainly the best thou canst possibly enjoy. Meditate upon him, meditate upon his Nature, his Word, his Works, his eternal Rewards in another World; and by this you may come to have a pleasant, comfortable Life here, and be prepar'd for a Life of Glory and Happiness hereafter.

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SERMON XI.

GEN. XXIV. 63.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the Field at the Even-tide.

IV. **I** Come now to lay down some Directions for the right Management of this Duty. And this I would do, because there are two things of almost equal Importance in such Cases as this we are discoursing upon: one is, to be convinced of thy Duty so as to set about it; and the other, to perform it in such a manner as will render it useful and acceptable. This latter is to be regarded at least in the next place, if not full as much as the former, inasmuch as without it the other is not like to attain its End. Now I find many Directions given upon this Occasion, which those who have a mind to have a large Account of, may consult Dr. *Manton* and *Calamy* upon this Text, and the last Part of Mr. *Baxter's Saints Everlasting Rest*. But my Design now is to give you a few Directions which may render this Performance practicable without being tiresome to you, and such as People of the meanest Capacities, with
a lit-

a little Care and Pains may generally come up to. And here I shall direct you with respect to four things.

1. With respect to what should be done in order to prepare us for this Duty. I suppose now that you are convinced it is your Duty to Meditate, as *Isaac* in my Text did; and that you are resolv'd upon the Practice of it. Now when you are about to set upon this Practice, that which is chiefly incumbent on you is, to get your selves into a suitable Temper for it: For there are proper Dispositions and Frames of Spirit which we are to come to most Duties with: We are to go to the Hearing the Word of God, we are to kneel down and pray to the Blessed God with serious Hearts, or else we are like to commit that abominable Sin which we are earnestly warn'd against, *offering the Sacrifice of Fools*, Eccl. 5. 1. And thus we are to get a serious Temper when we are going to Meditate, as well as to Hear or Pray. Now there are many ways of getting into such a Temper, which every one must be left to make use of as his spiritual Prudence shall impartially direct him. But there are two which seem to be worth a more especial regard and notice. He that would be prepared by a serious Temper for holy Meditation, should live a Life of constant Devotedness to God. For this will make such a Temper habitual to us, and we shall have it at command upon almost all Occasions. Whereas by a careless loose manner of Behaviour, by giving way

to Frothiness and Sin, we shall become very
averse to such heavenly Work as this. A Life
of Meditation is the most heavenly one we
can lead in this World; and nothing will suit
with that, but a heavenly Conversation. The
other way to be serious in Meditation, is to
look up to God for his Assistance to make us
so. I don't say it is absolutely necessary to
Pray always before we Meditate: But is thy
Heart backward to this Duty, or dost thou
want to work it into a fitter Frame for it than
it is in at present? Prayer for divine Grace to
help thee is one of the properest Courses thou
canst take for it.

2. With respect to the outward Circum-
stances which our Meditations upon spiritual
things are to be attended with. By these out-
ward Circumstances, I mean especially, those
of the Time and the Place which we meditate
in: For there is a great Difference betwixt
the Ceremonies and the Circumstances to be
observ'd in the Discharge of a Duty. We may
perform it without the former; and when any
are join'd to it, they ought to be of God's Ap-
pointment: But we can never perform it
without the latter. There must be some Time,
and some particular Place, to carry on thy
Meditations in. Now the only Rule I will
give, with respect to these, is, Fix upon that
Time, and betake your self to that Place
where you think you can best carry on this
heavenly Work. It is said in my Text, that
Isaac went out to meditate *in the Field*, which
he

he seems to have chosen for the Privacy of that Place ; and that he did it *in the Evening* ; because that, I suppose, was the time when his Spirits were most calm and serious. I don't believe we are bound to follow him in these particular Circumstances without any Alteration. Some Persons are fittest for Meditation in the Morning, when their Thoughts are clearest and their Spirits most lively, and before the World has got into their Hearts and Affections: others can do it better in their private Closets than they can in the Field or Garden. As to these Matters, every Person must consult his Temper, the Circumstances of his Employment, Family, &c. And therefore, as the Apostle says in another case, *Let every man be persuaded in his own mind*, Rom. 14. 5. so I would say in the present case, Let every Soul impartially consider when and where he can think upon God in the most serious manner ; and that's the Time or Place which I would advise him to fix upon.

3. With respect to the inward Workings of our Souls while we are meditating upon these things. And this is the principal thing which calls for our Observation, to take care that our Spirits be duly manag'd during the Performance of this Duty. But then you'll ask me, How must I manage my own Soul ? and after what manner must that work while I am thus meditating ? Now to this I answer as follows.

1. We should endeavour to fix our Minds, and keep them attentive to the Subject which we are meditating upon. It is the Advice which the Wise-man has given to all Persons, *Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of Life*, Prov. 4. 23. Follow but that Direction, and thou wilt never have that reason to complain of the Badness of thy Heart which thou frequently hast for want of it. But the Advice is never more needful to be observ'd, than in this Duty of Meditation. We have need then, in a peculiar manner, to watch over our Thoughts, and to take care that we attend upon the Lord in it without Distraction: partly, because it is so hard a matter to fix them in any Duty, but especially in this; and partly, because the wandering of our Thoughts destroys the very Nature of this Duty, which lies in thinking upon the things of God. This, I must own, is pretty difficult Work to those who are not us'd to it; but surely 'tis not impossible, if we would strive a little with our selves, if we would shut the World out of our Thoughts, if we would lay a Law upon our Senses, and if we would check the first Diversions and Wanderings when we are running into 'em.

2. We should endeavour not only to think as closely, but as regularly as we can at the same time; *i. e.* to carry on our Thoughts upon the Subject of them in that Method which may be suitable to the nature of it. As suppose you were meditating upon Death, which

which was one thing I recommended to be often thought of, how would you carry on your Reflections upon this? Why, 'tis natural to think of the Certainty of a dying Hour, that *it is appointed for all Men once to die*, Heb. 9. 2. and of the Consequences that follow after it, that they are the most awful ones, even an Eternity of Happiness or Misery; and of the Way by which we may come to die comfortably and safely, that it must be by a Life of Faith and Holiness in this World. So were I to meditate upon a Day of Judgment, I would think that such a Day there will certainly be; and this I would convince my self of, by my being a reasonable, and consequently an accountable Creature; by the unequal Distributions of Rewards and Punishments in this World; and especially by the Word of God, which tells me, that *God has appointed a Day wherein he will judge the World in Righteousness*, Acts 17. 31. I would think of the vast Solemnities of such a Day; that all must appear to be judged out of the three Books, of Conscience, the Omniscience of God, and the Gospel of Christ; I would think of the Equity which will then appear in the Sentence which my Judge will pass upon me and the rest of the World, that he will judge every Man according to his Works; and I would think upon the different Aspect which it will carry towards the Righteous and the Wicked; that it will be the most joyful Day to the former, but the most terrible to the latter, that ever they saw since they had a Being.

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I give you these only as a short Specimen, to shew what Thoughts you may have upon such Subjects ; not that the same Method is always to be observ'd in our Meditations, but take that which is most natural, and may best answer the End you are to meditate for. For Meditation, as Mr. Baxter observes, is the same in private as Preaching is in publick ; and therefore if you understand the Method which Ministers take in Preaching, you'll easily understand the Method which you are to take in private Meditation.

3. Whatever we meditate upon, we should endeavour to set home upon our Hearts and Affections ; *i. e.* we should beware of Formality in our Meditations, and having a Heart that is cold, and dead, and unaffected, in them. When a Minister preaches as he ought to do, he does not only inform and convince the Understanding, but he speaks so as to warm and affect the Heart : And so must we do in this private Preaching to our own Souls, set it home by serious and personal Application. Say to thy Soul as *Nathan* did to *David*, *Thou art the Man*, 2 Sam. 12. 7. I am the Person who am concern'd in all this. As in the two Cases I but now mention'd, when you are meditating upon Death, you must not only think that it is certain, and that it will be an awful thing to die, but that this will come to be your own Case in a little while : and if so, What Preparation have you made for it ? How culpable have you been in neglecting such

such a Preparation? How speedy and how diligent should you be that you may be thoroughly prepared? When you are meditating upon Judgment, Lord, may you say, is this true, that I must not only die, but be judged when I am dead, and can I say, that I am ready to answer at the Bar of God? O my Soul! what Account wilt thou give at this dreadful Day of the Lord which is coming upon all this World? Have I liv'd as one that must account for all that is done in the Body? Examine into thy State, and Temper, and Actions, all which will be brought into Judgment. If I have been faithful to God and my own Soul, this will be the Day of Redemption to me. If I have been unfaithful, better had it been for me that I had never been born. Surely therefore I will now endeavour to get Oyl into my Lamp and Vessel: I will endeavour to be as one that waits for the Coming of my Lord. There are a great many Ways of setting home these or any other Matters of Meditation upon your Hearts and Affections. Sometimes you may do it by serious Self-Examination; Have not I been guilty of this Sin? Have I faithfully discharged this or the other Duty? Sometimes you may do it by a use of Reproof; I have not acted as I ought, and how much am I to be blamed for it? Sometimes you may do it by a use of Terror; How dreadful will my Case be, if I go on sinning thus against God and my own Soul? Sometimes by a use of Comfort; This is a pleasant Truth, and if I am a true Christian,

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I may take Satisfaction in it. And lastly, you may do it by calling your self to such Resolutions as the Matter evidently requires; *I have done Iniquity, but I will do so no more, Job 34. 32.* I have hitherto been sincere and faithful by the Grace of God; and by the same Grace I will persevere and be constant in it.

4. With respect to the End and Consequence of our Meditations. And here I need only mention this one Direction: Remember that Meditation is not design'd for it self alone, but to make thee a better Man and a better Christian than thou wast before. For this is one of those which we call the instrumental parts of Religion, *i. e.* such as are to be us'd as Instruments, to prepare us for Duty here and for Glory hereafter. If this be true, then you are certainly oblig'd to reduce your Meditations into Practice. And this is the more necessary, because one remarkable part of a regular Meditation is holy Resolution: the Soul, when it is reflecting upon Sin, is to resolve against it; when it meditates upon Heaven, is to purpose that it will prepare for it. And such Resolutions as these must be put into execution, or else Christ may say to us as he did to the wicked Servant, *Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee, Luke 19. 22.* Let this then be the issue of your Meditations upon God, to make you more like him, and more obedient to him. Let it be the Effect of thy Meditations upon Sin, to make thee hate it, and forsake it. Let thy Meditations upon
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Heaven make thee more heavenly in thy Temper and Conversation: otherwise thy Meditation will be but a lost Duty, and all the Time thou hast spent in it will be so much Time lost and wasted to no purpose. But if this be the Effect of it, thou may'st then say of it as the Disciples upon the Mount, *It is good to be here.* I am now,

5. To shew you the Benefit and Advantage which this Duty is apt to be attended with. And this, together with what I have already said concerning the Necessity of it, may serve as a Motive to perswade us to practise the Rules I have been now laying before you. Now there are six Advantages which attend the serious Performance of this Duty.

1. It's one of the best Preservatives against the Temptations of the World. We are continually surrounded with, and beset by, Temptations of one sort or other, while we are in this Life: and how to keep from the Evil of these Temptations, is the great Enquiry of a serious and religious Person. Now if you would have an Antidote against Temptation, one of the best which I can recommend to you is this, to be often in the Mount of Religious Contemplation: For what can be more likely to make the Soul watchful against Sin, than frequent Thoughts of the Danger and Mischief of it? What can engage thee to flight the Terrors and Allurements of the World so much as feeling the Powers of the

World

World to come? And they are most sensibly felt, when we meditate upon Heaven, Hell, Judgment, &c. Accordingly this is recommended by the Spirit of God, as a means to keep us from falling into Sin. Must a *Job* be perswaded to keep from Impatience under Crosses and Afflictions, by what means must he be so restrain'd? Why, he is told, ch. 37. 14. *Hearken unto this, O Job, stand still and consider the wondrous Works of God.* And would a *David* refrain from sinning when he is tempted to; how will he deal with his own Soul to persuade it from so doing? Why, he tells you, *Psal. 119. 11. Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.* And would any Person be confirm'd in the Ways of Religion, so as to be Proof against Temptations of any sort or kind? He is told how he may come to this, *Prov. 4. 26. Ponder the path of thy feet, and all thy ways shall be establish'd.*

2. It's a means of converting the Soul from the Love and Practice of Sin, to a State of Holiness and Salvation. There is a twofold conversion which the Soul of Man may pass under in this Life; and both these are wrought by serious Meditation. There is a conversion from a Course of Sin: And this the Psalmist may refer to in that remarkable *Psalm, I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy Testimonies, Psal. 119. 59, 60.* He that considers the damnable Condition he is in so long as Sin has dominion over him, will turn his Feet unto the Testimonies of God, or into

a Course of Obedience, unless he be very mad upon his Lusts indeed: nay he will, like the Psalmist, in the next Words, *make haste, and delay not, to keep his Commandments*; and so 'tis a means of a speedy Conversion and Repentance. There is also a Conversion from some particular Sin, which the Soul has lately been drawn into: And this St. Peter was converted from by Thought or Meditation; for, *when he thought thereon he wept*, Mark 14. 72. He could not have the heart to love that Sin whereby he had forsaken his Lord, deny'd and even forsworn his Lord, when once he thought seriously of it. This then is another Benefit of this Duty: for certainly if Salvation be a Benefit, Conversion must be so too.

3. 'Tis the way to attend upon the Ordinances of God so as to be accepted by him and to get Advantage by 'em our selves. You are often putting up your Bills, complaining that you can't profit by the Word of God. I can tell you several things which may be the Cause of it, and many Methods whereby you may come to profit; but I will now only mention this, Meditate upon what you hear: for Meditation, after the Word of God heard or read by us, is like chewing the Cudd after feeding, which makes the Food digest, and nourish the Creature that is fed by it. And therefore you find the Parable tells us, *that the fruitful Hearer is he that heareth the Word, and understandeth it*, Mat. 13. 23. *συνιών*, he that ponders and considers it. Nay, this is the way

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not only to profitable Hearing, but to the acceptable worshipping of God in general. See Eccl. 5. 1, 2. *Keep thy foot when thou goest into the House of God; ponder thy Paths, consider what thou art going to do; and be more ready to hear than to offer the Sacrifice of Fools, for they consider not that they do evil:* Did they consider as they ought to do, they'd never worship him in so unsuitable a manner. *Be not rash with thy Mouth, and let not thine Heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth:* think of the Distance betwixt him and thee, and thou wilt worship him with Fear and Reverence, which will be the most acceptable sort of Worship. Now 'tis certainly a great Advantage to be brought to attend upon a God so as to be accepted, and so as to receive Benefit to our own Souls: For that's the only way to render your Worship worthy any thing, and without it you worship him in vain; nay, your Worship will do you a Disadvantage, for it will rise up at last against you.

4. By religious Meditation, we come to enjoy that part of Religion which is comfortable and delightful. There are many Persons who have much of real Religion in their Hearts and Lives, and yet they have very little of the Pleasure of it; the comfortable part of it, which lies in Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost, they are Strangers to. I am much afraid that this proceeds often from the Neglect of the Duty we are discoursing upon. This I dare venture to say, frequent and close

Meditation would be the likeliest way to give you a Taste of these Joys and Comforts. *My Meditation of thee, says the Psalmist, shall be sweet, and I will be glad in the Lord, Psal. 104. 34. Whoso is wise, and will observe, or reflect upon, these things, even they shall understand the Loving-kindness of the Lord, Psal. 107. 43.* This, in short, is the Life of Faith, and that I am sure is the most likely to be a Life of Comfort. It is that which the Scripture calls a Person's having his Conversation in Heaven. When is a Person's Conversation in Heaven, but when his Thoughts are there? And a heavenly Conversation is a pleasant, delightful one, such as resembles Heaven in the Joyfulness of it.

5. 'Tis the way not only to have the Habit, but also the Exercise of Grace in our Souls. It is a mighty Benefit to have Grace constantly at work in thy Heart and Affections; when it does not lie asleep like an Infant in the Womb, but like a grown Person performs the Offices of Life in their proper Time and Place. Now this Advantage you get by Meditation. In the Lord's Supper this Duty is peculiarly exercis'd by us, and *then when the King sits at his Table, the Spikenard sendeth forth the Smell thereof, Cant. 1. 12.* Wherein does this Duty consist, but in inward Workings of Soul towards God and spiritual things; and these not only the Musings of the Mind, but the Burning of the Heart and Affections too? So that a Man's own Experience, who is acquainted with it, will tell him, that close Me-

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itation is a wonderful help to awaken his Faith, inflame his Love, strengthen his Hope, and enliven his Desires after God.

6. By all this it helps to prepare us for Heaven and another World. That which gives you a sight of Sin, so as to convert you from it, that which helps you on in the Exercise of Grace, and that which promotes your Joy and Comfort, must help you in your way to Heaven: For these things are the direct Road to that blessed Country. To which I might add, that by Meditation we come to be acquainted with God; *Acquaint thy self also with him, and be at Peace, Job 22. 21.* How do we get acquainted with God, but by daily Communion with him, by conversing with him in this and the like Exercises of Religion? Now that Soul which is the most acquainted with God, is certainly fittest for the Enjoyment of him; those who converse with him before-hand, must be the best prepar'd to carry on an eternal Communion with him in another World. And this compleats the Advantage of this Practice: It prepares us for the heavenly State and Life. And there is no greater Blessing we can enjoy, no higher Benefit we can reap from any thing in this World, than to be prepar'd by it for an eternal one.

APPLICATION.

1. Hence we may see, that there is a great deal of Sin to be committed, or a great deal

of Good to be enjoyed, by our very Thoughts. We are told, that *the thought of Foolishness is Sin*, Prov. 24. 9. Sometimes we may sin by thinking upon wicked Objects, and sometimes we sin by not thinking upon good ones. For 'tis thy Duty to meditate upon thy God, thy Redeemer, thy Latter-end, &c. And O how much Good may we enjoy by our very Thoughts! Turn them towards God and Heaven, and thou wilt have more Pleasure than by all the Thoughts thou canst have about the World. So that thy own Thoughts may give thee either much of Heaven or much of Hell before thou art got into it.

2. See from what has been said, the Way to be delivered from such Thoughts as are vain and troublesome. There is scarce any thing which Christians do more complain of, than the Frothiness of their Thoughts. This is a Burthen which they labour under almost every day; and 'tis the greater Trouble to them, because they are told that their Thoughts are sinful, and that they are accountable for them as well as for their Actions. Now wouldst thou be delivered from these vain and troublesome Thoughts? Why, go and employ thy Meditations upon God, and Christ, and Heaven. Turn thy Mind to such Thoughts as will be more holy and more comfortable to thee. Does the Devil bid thee pore upon thy Afflictions? Go and think upon thy Title to eternal Happiness. Thy Care must lie in diverting thy Mind, which a little Pains will help thee to do.

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3. Hence see, what is the best Remedy against that time-wasting Sin of Idleness, and that no Person need to complain that he knows not what to do with his precious Time. Hast thou nothing to do, nothing to be doing for thy self or others? Why, Go and meditate upon the Concerns of thy Soul, commune betwixt God and thy own Spirit in secret, and there thou wilt find both more Business than thou canst easily discharge, and better than if thou wast getting all the Wealth of the *Indies* into thy Coffers.

4. Let this teach us to look to the Frame of our Hearts in the Duties we engage in, that so they may be acceptable, both for Matter and Manner, at the same time. It should be our Desire, as it was that of the Psalmist's, *Let the Words of my Mouth, and the Meditations of my Heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord my Strength and my Redeemer*, Psal. 19. 14. And if we would have them acceptable to God, we must look to our Hearts in 'em; for otherwise the Duty we perform is but a Form of Godliness without the Power of it, which is a hateful thing in the sight of God.

5. Let this Duty be conscientiously practis'd and perform'd by us. Have you liv'd in the Neglect of it hitherto, as I am afraid many of us have done? Be humbled for that, and take up this Resolution, I'll go out into the Field, or I'll go to my Closet, or to some convenient Place, where I'll get acquainted with my God.

God. Methinks you should not dare to neglect that which is so plainly the Duty of a Man and Christian, and which has such Advantages attending upon it. You should rather be thankful that you have a Soul that's capable of thinking upon and enjoying Communion with the Blessed God. He has given thee such a Faculty as makes thee capable of of it: use it for that end; for surely he never gave it to thee in vain. In a word, Be as frequent as thy Constitution, and Employment, and other Circumstances in the World will allow thee, to be in this Practice. And above all, be attentive and affectionate in it; live as one who hath been with Jesus, and be much in converse with God, till you come to that World, where your Thoughts will never wander away from him, where you will have the clearest Views of him that you are capable of, and where you will so think of him, as to be perfectly like him in Holiness and Happiness, and that for ever.

SERMON XII.

Solomon's Song, Ch. I. ver. 7.

*Tell me, O thou whom my Soul loveth,
where thou feedest, where thou makest
thy Flock to rest at Noon; for why
should I be as one that turneth aside,
by the Flocks of thy Companions?*

THere are two Things which it highly concerns every Person in the World to enquire into, and to be inform'd about. The one is, What is that Temper which he is to carry towards the Son of God; and the other, What Returns of Love and Kindness he may expect from him: the one relating to his Duty, and the other to his Privilege and Encouragement. Now both these you have an Account of in the Words which have been read unto you. They are spoken in the Name or Person of the Church of Christ, who addresses her self to him for Direction whither to go, for that spiritual Entertainment which he vouchsafes to his People. But as she goes to her Redeemer for his Direction and Blessing, so she declares her remarkable

markable Affection to him. So that you have here a brief but comprehensive Description of the Temper of such a Soul as is truly espoused to the Lord Jesus, and of the rich Provision which it does or may partake of at his hands.

But before I come directly to the Words, I shall speak a little to the Context, and shew you how they are introduc'd.

This Chapter contains, as the other Parts of this Book do, a Discourse between Christ and the Church. In the foregoing part of it, the Church begins her Address to Christ: and therein she gives him an Account of her Affection to him, together with her Desires after a Manifestation of his Love to her. This we are to understand in a very spiritual manner: and indeed in reading this part of the Holy Scripture we ought to be cautious, lest a corrupt Fancy convert that into matter of Banter which the Spirit of God indited with the greatest Seriousness and Chastity in the World. After this the Church proceeds to a Confession of her Unworthiness, upon the account of her spiritual Deformity and Unfruitfulness: *She was black as the Tents of Kedar, i. e.* through Infirmities and Sufferings she was render'd mean and contemptible; tho' still she was *comely as the Curtains of Solomon*, like the rich Furniture of a royal House or Palace. She was *made the Keeper of the Vineyards*, entangled in the Affairs of the World; but *her own Vineyard had she not kept*, those worldly Diversions made her, as they do many a true Christian, neglect

neglect the Care of her better part, forget to improve her Gifts and Graces as she ought to have done. And now having thus eas'd herself by complaining of what was amiss in her, she comes, in the words of my Text, to a Method for the Cure of it: *Tell me, O thou, &c.*

In which words we have three Things observable, as the Parts of them :

I. The Title under which the Church addresses her self to the Lord Jesus: *O thou whom my Soul loveth.*

II. The Matter of her Address to him; *Tell me where thou feedest, and where thou makest thy Flock to rest at Noon.*

III. The Reason or Ground of this Address, in the last Clause; *For why should I be as one that turneth aside, &c.*

I shall lay down the whole of what seems proper to be insisted upon from the Words, in these four Propositions.

1. That the Lord Jesus is the Person whom the Soul of a true Believer does unfeignedly and sincerely love: *O thou whom my Soul loveth.*

2. That Christ, as well as his Companions, has a Flock which he is the Shepherd or the Leader of.

3. That in the Ordinances of Christ he makes this Flock to feed and rest even when it is scorch'd by Tryals and Temptations.

4. That

4. That 'tis a most desirable thing to the true Believers to be directed to those Ordinances where he will thus feed and refresh their Souls.

1. That the Lord Jesus is the Object whom the Soul of a true Believer does unfeignedly and sincerely love: *O thou whom my Soul loveth.* That it is the Duty of a Believer to be of this Temper, is very plain: for, *if any Man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema Maranatha,* 1 Cor. 16. 22. But it is not only thy Duty to love him, but thou really dost love him if thou art a Believer in a right manner: For we are told, that *in Jesus Christ neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision, but Faith which worketh by Love,* Gal. 5. 6. i. e. thy outward Privileges are of no Advantage without a Faith in the Lord Jesus; nay, thy Faith it self will not avail to thy Salvation, unless it have Love to Christ to render it influential upon thy Heart and Life. Here then is an Evidence whereby we are to try the Truth of our Faith in the Son of God. You are often enquiring, How shall I know whether I am a Believer in the Lord Jesus? Why, if you are of that number, you do love him as well as believe on him. But then you will ask me, How does a Believer love the Lord Jesus Christ? and, How shall I know whether I have that Love which is hearty and unfeigned? To this I answer in the following Particulars.

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1. The Love of a Believer to the Lord Jesus is always founded upon an Esteem of him. 'Tis not a blind Affection, as our Love to many of the Comforts of this World frequently is. Alas! we can scarce give any Reason why we are so fond of 'em. But the Believer knows a Christ to be worthy of the highest Affection he can carry towards him, and therefore he thinks he can never have Love enough for him: *To you that believe, he is precious*, 1 Pet. 2. 7. They put an extraordinary Price upon such a Saviour; they priz'd, esteem'd, and valu'd him, as one that deserv'd a Place in their Hearts and Affections. This is the way to have a rational Love for him; and that's the Love which he is most pleas'd with, nay the only one which he will accept of.

2. 'Tis a Love that is extensive and universal: It reaches to every thing that is to be found in this blessed Object. There is nothing in the World but what has somewhat that is unlovely to be observ'd in it; Relations they have their Corruptions, their daily Sins and Infirmities, which call for thy Compassion towards 'em, and thy Prayers for 'em, but can never demand thy Love. Thou must love their Persons and their Souls, but must never love 'em for their Sins. And so there is in the best Enjoyments of this Life; they have all of 'em a Vanity which cleaves to 'em, to make us love 'em but very slightly and indifferently. But now there is nothing in a Saviour but
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what is perfectly amiable; and the more we know of him, the more we shall find he deserves to be lov'd by us. And so far as a Believer knows him to deserve Love, so far he will be apt to desire and delight in him.

3. The Love which a Believer has for the Lord Jesus, exceeds that which he has for any thing in the World besides. This is that which our Saviour makes the Test of our Sincerity; *If any Man come to me, and hate not his Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, and Brethren and Sisters, yea and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple*, Luke 14. 26. He must hate 'em; not lay aside natural Affection to 'em, but in a comparative Sense, love 'em infinitely less than he does him: And this was the very Temper of the Apostle, when he *counted all things but dross and dung that he might win Christ, and be found in him*, Phil. 3. 8. So that if there be any thing that is dearer to thee than thy dear Redeemer; if there be any Friend or Child, or Relation or Enjoyment, that sits nearer to thy Heart than he, thou do'st not love him in a saving manner.

4. 'Tis a Love which expresses it self by universal Obedience. That's another Test of its Sincerity: for *if ye love me*, says our Lord himself, *keep my Commandments*, John 14. 15. And, *Then are ye my Friends, when ye do whatsoever I command you*, ver. 16. He that has an unfeigned Love to another, will be careful to please him; he won't be perpetually crossing and

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and affronting of him. And thus it is in thy Love to Christ; 'tis no hearty Affection if thou can'st be pleas'd when he is displeas'd; if thou hast no regard to what he desires and expects from thee. Nay I must do whatsoever he commands me. Perhaps he calls me to that which I have no Inclination to; but Love will make me cross my own Inclination that I may gratify his. Perhaps he calls me to that which crosses my Interest in the World; but Love will make the Interest of Christ dearer to me than my own. In short, I must love my Neighbour as my self; but I must love Christ more than my self, so far as I am at an Opposition to him: and if I do this, I shall scruple nothing that he requires of me, though it be contrary to my Interest and Inclination.

5. 'Tis a Love that is constant and persevering. I don't mean that it always burns in an equal degree in the same Soul; for Believers have their Up's and Downs while they are in this World: but nothing does totally separate them from the Love of Christ; nay they strive to be growing and encreasing in it: *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity*, Eph. 6. 24. The Word which we render Sincerity is *ἀφδρασία*, which denotes that which is lasting, durable, and incorruptible. It must be an immortal Love, or that which must never die. You'll meet with many and powerful Temptations in the World, and they'll be apt to strike at the very Root of your Love to Christ; nay, you'll be hated

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and opposed by the Devil and the World, because you love him. They can't endure that you should love any Person so much as themselves. But the Love of true Christians surmounts all the Difficulties that lie in the way of it. Their Love to Christ is like that which he carries in his Heart towards them; whom they love they love to the End. But I proceed to the

2d Thing, That Christ, as well as his Companions, has a Flock which he is the Shepherd or Leader of. By the *Companions* of Christ I understand all that pretend to be Sharers with him in our Hearts and Affections; his Rivals, and such as stand in competition with him; who may be call'd *Companions*, because they pretend to a sort of Equality with Christ. Some do understand by *Companions*, the Kings and Princes, the Powers and Potentates of the World; others, such as profess Relation to Christ, but are of a more earthly Temper, as *Esau*, and *Ishmael*, and the Sons of *Corah*, and those that went after *Jeroboam* who made *Israel* to sin, and the — Hereticks — in the Days of the Gospel: But whichever of these we take it for, it amounts at last to all that sets up for a Rivalship against our Lord Jesus, and would pretend to as great a Right in our Affections as he. Now these are said here to have their Flocks, which the true Believer would shun and avoid. They have the greatest part of the World devoted to them, of the same Temper and Disposition with 'em. But then Christ

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has his Flock also, that which he feeds and makes, like a careful Shepherd, to rest at Noon. This Relation betwixt Christ and his Flock implies two things.

I. The peculiar Care which Christ expresses for the Welfare and Happiness of the Flock which he is related to. A Shepherd is to look carefully to his Flock, that it may not be destroy'd by the Wolf who is lying in wait for it, and that it may want no Pasture, no Provision that is necessary to preserve or encrease it. And thus it is said concerning our Saviour, *that he should feed his Flock like a Shepherd, that he should gather the Lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young*, Isa. 40. 11. In the first Ages of the World, before it was overspread with those abominable Sins, Idleness and Pride; the Father of the Family, though he was never so rich, either by himself or his Children, look'd after his own Cattel: and when he trusted the Care of 'em to any other, it was reckon'd a mighty Argument of Respect and Confidence in that Person. Therefore our Lord is called by the Title of a spiritual Shepherd, to denote his wonderful Concern for the Church which he purchas'd with his own Blood: nay, he does not only take care of it, but he expos'd himself to the greatest Danger for the sake of it; did not fly like the Hireling when the Wolf came, but *laid down his Life for the Sheep*, John 10. 11. Nay it is a peculiar Concern which Christ has for his Church and People: *He is the Saviour of all Men, but especially of them*

that believe. He has some Kindness which he expresses towards every Creature in the World ; but that Providence which he exercises towards them, is chiefly design'd for the Benefit of the other : for, *He is made the Head over all things to his Church*, Ephes. 1. 22.

2. The humble Submission which the Flock owes and pays to his Directions and Instructions. You know how quietly the Sheep follow the Shepherd, whithersoever they are led by him. They don't dispute the matter, whether they shall go after him or not ; but 'tis enough for them if he does but lead the way, or give any plain token which Path they should betake themselves to. Thus it is in those that belong to the Flock of Christ: *My Sheep hear my Voice, and I know them, and they follow me*, John 10. 27. They hear it, *i. e.* they know it from the Voice of a Stranger ; and they hear it, *i. e.* they hearken to it, so as to obey and follow it. Christ has two ways of directing his Flock in this World ; he does it by his Word, and he does it by his Example ; and both these they pay an unreserved Obedience and Submission to. They hear the one, and they follow him in the other, so far as he intended to be a Pattern to 'em. 'Tis plain that they universally owe him such a Submission ; his Care and Kindness in feeding and preserving 'em is an Obligation to it. And they do not only owe, but pay it also ; for, not believing, which is the same as not hearing or following Christ, is an Argument that we are not his Sheep, *John 10. 26.*

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The 3d Head was, That Christ, in the Ordinances of his Gospel, makes his Flock to feed and rest, when they are scorched by the Temptations of the World. This is the matter of the Church's Request in these Words; *Tell me where thou feedest, and where thou makest thy Flock to rest at Noon*: Direct me to thy true Gospel-Ordinances, in which I may receive Food and Refreshment for my immortal Soul. It is supposed by some, that this refers to the Service which was paid to God in the Temple at *Jerusalem*, or in *Dan* and *Bethel*, where *Jeroboam's* Calves were worshipped together with him. See *1 Kings* 12. 27, 28, 29. Shew me, *q. d.* which of these Places thou wilt be most graciously present in. But I rather understand it of the Ordinances in general, as a Request that Christ would bring her to those which she might find useful and comfortable to her. When it is said, that he makes them to rest at Noon, the Meaning is, in the Heat of Temptation, Persecution as some expound it, or other Trials in general, while they were passing towards another World.

Now there are two Things which Christ does for his People in these Ordinances.

1. He feeds them. There is that to be found in 'em which is as Food to their Spirits. Christ himself is here offer'd to be fed upon, and he is said to be *the Bread of Life*, *John* 6. 35. And here is the Grace of Christ reach'd out to the true Believer: and that, you know, is for a different Use and Purpose; sometimes to en-

lighten, and sometimes to quicken, strengthen us, &c. The Design of Food is to preserve Life. By the Ordinances thou hast that Grace convey'd into thy Soul, without which the Life of Holiness would never have been wrought, and can never be maintained in thee. The Design of Food is, to fit us for the Work and Business of Life. In the Ordinances you receive Strength from above, to enable you for all the Duties you owe to God, your selves, and your Fellow-Creatures. The Design of Food is, to strengthen us to bear the Labours and Difficulties of Life; and by the Ordinances we receive *Grace that shall be sufficient for us*, 2 Cor. 12. 9. and *Grace to help us in the time of need*, Heb. 4. 16. The Design of our natural Food is, to increase Life, till we come to the outmost Vigour and Perfection of it; and in the Ordinances we receive not only Strength, but Growth at the same time: We are to *take the sincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby*, 1 Pet. 2. 2.

2. He makes them to rest in the midst of the hottest Temptations they encounter with. He not only feeds, but comforts 'em; affords 'em that which they are wonderfully eas'd and satisfied and delighted by. And how does he do that? Partly, by giving 'em Grace to bear their Temptations; for that's one of the best ways to render them easie under 'em: and partly, by sealing his Love to their Souls, even that Love which is better than Wine, more comforting and refreshing, as you are told in

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the second Verse of this Chapter: and partly, by filling 'em with the Hopes of a better World, from whence certainly it is that all the substantial Rest and Comfort of a Soul must be fetch'd, if ever it has any. It was in the Ordinances that *David* had so much Satisfaction as made him long so earnestly for 'em when he was in the very Noon of his Trials and Persecutions: *My Soul thirsteth for thee, my Flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty Land, to see thy Power and thy Glory so as I have seen thee in the Sanctuary: Because thy Loving-kindness is better than Life, my Lips shall praise thee, Psal. 63. 1, 2, 3.* And it is the Ordinances of a Gospel that we are encouraged to go to, for the Consolations of God: *With joy shall they draw Waters out of the Wells of Salvation, Isa. 12. 3.* But I observe

4. and lastly, That 'tis a most desirable thing to the true Believers, to be directed to those Ordinances where he will thus feed and refresh them. For this was the very Desire of the Church in these Words; and it is thus exprest to shew that the particular Members of the Church are of the same Mind and Temper; that they long for the Time, long for the Place, long for the Institutions where they shall meet with the reviving Presence of the Lord Jesus. And this they do,

1. Because they have that in their Souls which does strongly dispose and incline them to it. They have the Love of Christ as a prevailing Principle in their Hearts. *O thou whom*

my Soul loveth, is the proper Language of every such Person. Their Hearts do follow hard after him. And if Christ be the Object of their Love, what wonder is it if the Ordinances of Christ be the Subject-matter of their Desires? For it is not the Ordinances themselves which they are to enjoy only, not the Shell, the external part of them: no! but a Christ exhibited to their View and spiritual sense in them. It's a Christ feeding, and giving 'em Rest and Satisfaction. And can they that are so full of Love to Christ forbear desiring that wherein they shall thus enjoy him? No more, certainly, than a hungry Person can forbear desiring Food, or than a Man that's thoroughly weary can help wishing for Rest for his bodily Refreshment; no more than a Needle can forbear moving to its beloved Loadstone, or any thing to its proper Center.

2. Because of the Benefit and Advantage which they have by 'em. Certainly 'tis no small Advantage to have Food and Rest for their Souls; and this they do commonly find in their Participation of the Ordinances of Christ; at least they frequently do so; and if they do not, 'tis generally through some Fault and Miscarriage of their own, not through any Backwardness in Christ to meet them in this way. Sometimes you complain that you go to the Sacrament, go to Sermons, go to publick and private Prayer, and are little the better: but is it not, O Soul, for want of Preparation

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paration to meet thy Redeemer in them? Is it not for want of looking to thy Heart in them? Or is it not for some Neglect of God and thy Duty when thou art absent from them? Surely we should seldom fail of being reviv'd by the Ordinances of Christ, if something were not amiss in us. Now Believers are apt to prize the Benefit they receive by them; and therefore they are as apt to cry, Tell me where thou feedest, O thou Beloved of my Soul.

3. Because of the Disadvantage they are apt to receive in too much conversing and attending elsewhere. This is the Reason alleged in the latter part of these Words; *for why should I be as one that turneth aside, by the Flocks of thy Companions?* Why should I converse with the World, which is the Rival of my Lord? Why should I flock with the Multitude, who are going in the Broad-way that leads to Destruction? Alas! what shall I get by that, but the same Condemnation with them? I shall not be blest with Food and Rest for my Soul by any but Christ; and therefore I would be often there where he is to be enjoyed. There is nothing to be got by thy forsaking the Lord Jesus; nay, there is a great deal of Mischief thou art in danger of from this World: and therefore the less thou art conversant with it, unless when Duty requires it, so much the better. This Believers are sensible of; they find the World to be a Clog to their Spirits, and therefore they love to retire from it.

4. Be-

4. Because the Ordinances of Christ do represent and prepare them for Heaven, where their Affections are principally plac'd and settled. The Hearts of all true Believers are in another World, the heavenly State, where their Treasure is. They have chosen that for their Happiness, and therefore thither they do ultimately refer their Desires and Inclinations: *Where your Treasure is, there will your Heart be also*, Matt. 6. 21. Now the Ordinances of Christ do represent this Heaven to their View and Thoughts. When they are serious in them, they are like *Moses upon Pisgah*, the Mount of Vision, where they have a noble Prospect of the Land that flows with Milk and Honey. There is a River that parts 'em; but they can see it at a little distance; so that they are mightily rais'd with the very Prospect. Nay, these Ordinances do help to prepare 'em for Heaven, by encreasing the heavenly Life in them: and this is another Reason why they do thus desire them. They don't desire them so as to rest in them; beware of that when you attend upon the most excellent of 'em: but they desire 'em as the lively Description of, and as the ready way to bring them to Heaven, which is the greatest thing they expect or wish for.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

1. Bless God that thou hast the Ordinances of Christ, and see that they be truly desirable to thy Soul. That we have 'em, is a Mercy we cannot be too thankful for, especially since they

they have been often forfeited. And as we ought to be thankful for, so let us earnestly desire 'em: For it is certainly a most desirable thing which they exhibit to us, a Christ bringing Food and Rest at the same time. And we should be thus thankful and desirous of 'em, because 'tis the Temper of Religious Persons to be so. 'Tis their Temper to be thankful for Ordinances: *With Joy shall they draw Water out of the Wells of Salvation*, Isa. 12. 3. And accordingly they do passionately long after 'em, as the Psalmist did when he said, *My Soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord*, &c. Psal. 84. 2.

2. Attend upon the Ordinances of Christ with the Love of Christ in thy Soul. They are good to beget Love: and therefore if you have it not already, be sure to follow 'em for that purpose, and never leave 'em till they have wrought it in you. Hast thou this Love in thy Soul? Bring it into the Presence of Christ when thou comest to worship and converse with him. This will make thee welcome to Christ; which thou canst never be, if thou dost not love him. Bring the Habit of this Love; bring it in its most lively Actings that you can possibly work it up to: Then will you find that his Love also will be discover'd to you; that he will feed you, and make you to rest at Noon, in the Heat of your Tryals and Temptations; and so, that 'tis good for you to draw nigh to him; nay, that a Day in his Courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

Occasion'd by the Sudden-Death of
 Mr. FRANCIS CADWALLADER, who
 dy'd in a Publick Congregation
 in *B R I S T O L*.

M A T T H. XXIV. 46.

*Blessed is that Servant, whom his Lord
 when he cometh shall find so doing.*

IT is now but the third Lord's-day since I spoke something upon the Occasion of the late Decease of a Member of this Society. I am at this time to speak to you upon the Death of a very near Relation, I mean the Husband of the same deceased Person. The Husband and Wife are said in Scripture to be one Flesh: There is so near an Union and Relation between them, that they may be reckon'd but one and the same Person. And it has been an Observation made by some, that when they have liv'd a considerable time together in this World, the one seldom survives the other long, but soon goes to the Grave after. This was remarkably verif'd in these

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These two Companions or Yokefellows I am speaking of, who in little more than a Fortnight were both call'd out of this World of ours, into that where they shall die no more. And it may call to our Minds what the Scripture mentions concerning *Saul and Jonathan*, that *they were lovely and pleasant in their Lives, and in their Death they were not divided,* they speedily departed one after the other, 2 Sam.

1. 23. And hereupon we may apply also that Expression of Holy *Job*, *They shall lie down alike in the Dust, and the Worms shall cover them,*

Job 21. 26. To entertain such a Thought as this when we enter into new Relations, would be very proper, and of excellent use to us; to remember that Death may speedily untie the Knot which nothing but that can unloose; and that those who have lain in the same Bed, eat and drank at the same Table, and worshipp'd God in the same Family and Closet, may in a little while be laid in the same Grave; nay, that one of us may live only to behold the other plac'd in their Bed of Dust, and the next Week or Month be laid down there ourselves.

The Person upon whose Account I have fix'd upon these Words, you know, was but the last Sabbath in this Assembly. Here he was wont often to worship his God with us; and hither his Affection brought him upon that Day, to solemnize the same Worship which he was wont to do. But, O the surprising Change which several of you were Witnesses of! In a moment, he who was found and

and healthy breath'd out his last ; no antecedent Pains and Diseases, no dying Groans were utter'd by him, or observ'd by us ; but his hasty Soul, like a Bird out of its Cage, and as if it thought it could not make too much haste to be gone, takes its Flight into the upper World, and leaves its Body an unactive Carcase in the midst of amazed Spectators. Thus he passed from the Throne of Grace here to the Bar of Christ in another World ; and thus I hope he went from the Assembly of the Saints upon Earth, to the general Assembly of the First-born, to worship and enjoy his God in the Congregation of the Saints above. This now would lead me to give you a Description of this deceased Person : But as you know it is not my Custom to commend the Dead so much as to instruct the Living ; so I shall industriously forbear at this time. I might acquaint you, if that would be any Advantage to his Character, that he was descended from the Race of Kings, in the Family of the *Cadwalladers*, who were the Kings of the *Britains*. But as this was only an accidental Ornament, which could add nothing to his personal Worth ; so I shall not insist upon it. And therefore all that I shall say of him is this, That he was an honest and a plain-hearted Man ; a tender Husband, and an indulgent Father ; and I hope I may add, a sincere Christian : So that tho' his sudden Departure was surprizing to us, yet 'twas comfortable to him.

And thus I come to the Words which I have
read

read unto you; wherein you have a short but
a comprehensive Account of the Privilege of
those who die in the Service of the Lord Jesus,
that they are in a blessed State and Condition.

They relate chiefly to the Apostles of Christ,
and so to Ministers who were to succeed them
to the End of the World. Our Saviour well
understood what ungrateful Treatment they
would meet with, how much they would be
insulted by haughty and designing Men; and
that often those very Persons whom they en-
deavour'd chiefly to please and save, would
be their greatest Enemies: And therefore to
support them under these Discouragements,
he tells them, that great would be their Re-
ward in Heaven if they continued to act as
wise and as faithful Servants. But I shall now
speak to the Words as suitable to the Case of
true Christians in general. And this I think
I may properly do, since the Blessedness here
mention'd belongs to them not meerly as Mi-
nisters, but as *wise and faithful Servants*.

Now the Proposition which they afford us
to be consider'd, is this:

That those Servants of Christ whom he
finds employed in his Service when he comes,
and calls 'em to an Account, are in a blessed
State and Condition.

In speaking to which Observation, I shall
endeavour,

1. To consider the Relation which Christ
and a Believer stand in to each other; which
is the Relation of a Lord and a Servant.

2. To

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2. To shew when we may be said to be found in Christ's Service at the time of his Coming.

3. To describe the happy Condition of those who are found thus employ'd.

4. To shew why this Blessedness is reserv'd for such as are found in the Service of Christ.

1. To consider the Relation which Christ and a Believer stand in to each other; and that is, the Relation of a Lord and a Servant. This we have frequent Intimations of in other places of Scripture, *One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are Brethren*, Matth. 23. 8. *Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am*, John 13. 13. And thus Believers are called the Servants of Christ; *Where I am, there shall my Servant be*, John 12. 26. There is a remarkable Expression we have in another place; *Henceforth I call you not Servants, but I have call'd you Friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you*, John 15. 15. Not that the Relation of a Lord and a Servant can ever cease betwixt Christ and the Soul: but this is to shew, that Christ will not treat us as Slaves, but will admit us to be both his Servants and his Friends at the same time. This Relation is founded not only upon Christ's being our Creator, for so all the Creatures are call'd the Servants of God, *Psal. 119. 91*. Nor is it grounded only upon this, that Christ does frequently use them as his Instruments to promote his Glory: Thus *Cyrus is call'd the Servant of God, that shall per-*
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form all his pleasure, Isa. 44. 28. And so the worst of Men are frequently call'd his Servants, as he makes use of 'em to carry on his Interest in the World. But that which this Relation is establish'd upon, is the Price which Christ has paid down for us, and the Covenant which there is between him and us. He has redeem'd us out of the Hands of Sin and Satan, and so he has that Right of Dominion over us which a Person has over the Servant whom he has bought or taken Captive: We are not our own, because we are bought with a price, 1 Cor. 6. 19. And being deliver'd out of the Hands of our Enemies, we must serve him without Fear, in Holiness and Righteousness all the days of our Lives, Luke 1. 74, 75. Thus there is likewise a Covenant drawn up betwixt Christ and the believing Soul; he actually consents to be the Lords: I enter'd into Covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine, Ezek. 16. 8. So that such a Soul is a Servant by his own Choice, or in the Apostle's Language, doing the Will of God from the Heart, Eph. 6. 6. In a word, this Relation denotes Christ's Dominion over us, and our Subjection unto him. It denotes his Right to an absolute Obedience to his revealed Will. And it denotes, lastly, his Right not only to Obedience, but to a zealous, cheerful, universal, and persevering one. But,

2. When may we be said to be found in the Service of Christ at the time of his coming to us? I answer,

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1. When

1. When we have given up our selves to Christ to be employed by him, and are heartily dispos'd for any Work and Service which he shall call us to. This may be said of every true Christian, that he has accepted of Christ for his Lord and Master, and that his Soul is engag'd to do him all the Service that possibly he can. And this is absolutely necessary to our dying in the Service of Christ: So that without it, we shall then be found Enemies instead of Friends or Servants to him. But when the Soul is thus devoted, and dispos'd for whatever Christ requires of him, then he may cry out, Lord, I am thy Servant; and come whenever thou pleasest, I hope I am ready for thee. For this is that Principle of Grace which Christ will accept of; and here we may apply what the Apostle tells us in another Case, *that if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a Man has, and not according to what he has not*, 2 Cor. 8. 12. Christ may come to my Soul as soon as ever this Temper is wrought in me; and then if I have no opportunity for further Service, my Desires and Resolutions will be rewarded by him.

2. When we are found making Holiness and Religion the principal Work and Business of our Lives. We are not only to be dispos'd by the Frame of our Souls towards God and Christ; but Religion must be pursued by us. When Time and Life is afforded to us, we must live soberly, righteously, and godly in this

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this present World. Now this is doing the Work of the Lord, as 'tis by Acts of Holiness and Obedience that we honour him before Men. What is it to serve the Lord Christ, but to do his Will upon Earth as it is done in Heaven? What is it, but, as the Apostle tells us, *to have Grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with Reverence and with godly Fear?* Heb. 12. 28. So that he who is remov'd out of this World while he is following after Holiness, making Religion his stated Business and Employment; this Person dies in the Service of the Lord Jesus: And when his Lord comes, he finds him so doing, so as he has commanded and directed him to do.

3. When we are found discharging that particular Work and Business which Christ has call'd us to, in order to promote his Interest in the World. Besides the general Calling which we are to serve Christ in as we are true Christians, there is a particular one which most of us are to pursue also: and in this we serve Christ likewise, who has call'd us to it: *Whom I serve*, says the Apostle, *in the Gospel of his Son*, Rom. 1. 9. And so those were the faithful Servants in that Parable, who employ'd their respective Talents so as to make a proportionable Improvement of 'em. And accordingly when the Master came, he punish'd him that had neglected the one Talent committed to him, but commended the rest who had improv'd theirs. He found 'em busie in their several ways for the promoting his Interest,

rest, and therefore applauds 'em with a *Well-done, good and faithful Servants*. This has been the Case often of Holy Persons, to be taken away in the very Act of serving their Redeemer, or as soon as they had done it. *Moses* was to conduct the *Israelites* to the Borders of *Canaan*; and when he had done it, goes up to the Mount and dies. *David*, after he had serv'd his Generation by the Will of God, fell asleep, and was laid to his Fathers and saw Corruption, Acts 13. 36. Some zealous Ministers have been seiz'd in the Pulpit with that Sickness which has prov'd their last; and many of 'em have exhausted their Strength in the Service of immortal Souls, and the Zeal of the Lord has eaten them up: so that in one sense they have not liv'd out half their Days. And this also has been the Case of others, who have spent their very Lives in the Cause of Reformation and Religion, by their forward Zeal wasting the Vigour of their Bodies, enraging the Devil and his Instruments to contrive their Ruin. This is to die in the Service of Christ.

4. When we are summon'd out of the World in the more immediate Acts of Worship and Devotion towards Christ himself. Those to whom we pay Divine Worship to, we are said in Scripture to serve: *Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor serve them*, Exod. 20. 5. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, Matt. 4. 10. So that to die in the Worship of God and Christ, is to die so doing,

my Text expresse it. It is to die serving the Lord both of Life and Death, if we are carrying on his Worship in a right manner, if we are worshipping him in Spirit and in Truth. Some godly Persons have met their Lord in this desirable Frame and Posture. The only Bed of Sicknes which they have laid upon, was their Cushions or their bare Floors, where they kneel'd and pray'd before God. They have gone to their Closets as hale as ever, but never came out more till they were carry'd to their Graves. They have dy'd upon their Knees while worshipping with their Families; and so, in a literal Sence, pour'd out their Souls in Prayer before God. And others have gone to meet with Christ in his publick Ordinances, as our deceased Friend did, and there they have found him in good earnest; and instead of seeing him through a Glass darkly, have gone to behold him face to face. These Persons may truly be said to die in the Service of Christ; and when he has come, he has found them so doing, *i. e.* actually serving of him. I proceed now to

3. The happy State and Condition of such as are found engag'd in the Service of Christ, when they are summon'd by him out of this World: *Blessed is that Servant*, &c. Here I might run over the several Descriptions which the Scripture gives us of the Glories of another World: But that would be too tedious, and therefore I will mention only these four things.

1. They are advanc'd to the highest Honour and Dignity. This is the Meaning of that Expression in the next words, *Verily I say unto you, he will make him Ruler over all his Goods*; and of that in the next Chapter, v. 21. *I will make thee Ruler over many things*, i. e. his Faithfulness shall be rewarded by the greatest Honour he is capable of and fit for. And thus we read in that parallel place *Luke 12. 37. That their Lord will gird himself, and make them sit down to Meat, and will come forth and serve them*: he will honour them in an unusual manner,

as if he became a Servant to them. It's an Allusion, as † one tells us, to a Custom of the *Romans, Christians, and Babylonians*; among whom, upon some particular Occasions, the Servants were wont to sit at Table, and their Masters to wait on 'em. They shall be honour'd, in short, by being admitted into the Presence of their Lord, to converse with him, and partake of the same Glory which he himself partakes of; by being plac'd at his right-hand; by sitting down with him upon his Throne as he is sat down with his Father upon his Throne; and by having a Crown of Righteousness plac'd upon their Heads.

2. They are admitted into a State of Rest and Satisfaction. There remains a Rest for the People of God, *Heb. 4. 9.* They are never wholly at ease while they are in this World: 'tis a State of Trial and Temptation to all of 'em. Nay the Service of their Lord,

tho'

tho' 'tis far better than any other, yet costs them a great deal of Pains and Labour. The Spirit is willing, but the Flesh is weak. How hard do they find it to attend upon the Lord, without Distraction, for a few Hours? How much Pains are we forc'd to take with our own Souls to bring them into a serious Frame, that we may serve him at a tolerable Rate? And, How much harder is it to maintain and keep up such a Frame long? All this we shall feel nothing of, when we come into the World above; but, we shall have all our Faculties at perfect Command: nay, we shall more easily serve our Redeemer than now we can wish to do it. All that can render us uneasy, whether within or without us, whether in the Circumstances of our Bodies or the Frame of our Souls, shall be done away.

3. They are in the full Possession of all the Happiness they are capable of. 'Tis not a State of Rest only which they go to, but a State of Enjoyment: *In thy Presence there is fullness of Joy, at thy right-hand there are Pleasures for evermore*, Psal. 16. 11. It's often describ'd to us under the Notion of a Feast and a Marriage-Supper, to denote the Fulness and the Plenty we are to partake of. This the Soul enters upon at the Dying-Hour, and this is perfected at the Morning of the Resurrection, when the entire Person of a Believer shall be restor'd and be with Christ. So that here is compleat Blessedness as to the Matter of it: Nothing can be now wanting

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but to have it secur'd to us: And even that shall be added too; for,

4. They are admitted to such an Honour, Rest, and Happiness, as will be eternal: So *shall we ever be with the Lord, 1 Theff. 4. 17.*

Thus you have the Nature of that Reward which the Service of Christ will entitle us to: And a most encouraging Reward it must be confess'd to be. But then it may be enquir'd why a Reward is connected with this Service? And that is the next General to be consider'd.

4. Why this Blessedness is reserv'd for such and such only as are found wise and faithful Servants at the coming of Christ? This, 'tis plain, is not to intimate any Purchase, which by their Service they can make of it: No! after all they must say, that they have been *unprofitable Servants, Luke 17. 10.* God spares every one of 'em, *as a Father spareth his Son that serveth him, Mal. 3. 17.* And 'tis Grace, Grace that advances 'em to Glory. Well, but Why then is this the Order which Christ will observe in dispensing this Blessedness to us? I answer,

1. This was the Method which he himself follow'd in his way to Blessedness in another World. He was to see of the Travail of his Soul, and be satisfied. But how was this to be brought about? Why, *by his Knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; for he shall bear their*

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their Iniquities, Isa. 53. 11. He must act as a faithful Servant in satisfying, and dying, and suffering the Will of the Father, and then reap the Satisfaction of it. He was to work the Works of him that sent him, while it was day. He was to appear in the Form of a Servant in this World; and then we are told that God highly exalted him, and gave him a Name above every Name, Phil. 2. 7, 9. Thus, according to his Example, we shall receive a Crown of Life in another World; but it must be after a Course of Faithfulness and Obedience in this. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his Throne, Rev. 3. 21.

2. That Blessedness is reserv'd for such as are found dying in Christ's Service, highly glorifies the Free-Grace of God. 'Tis celestial Happiness which thy Redeemer will then crown thy Soul with, such as is every way perfect, both for the Nature and Duration of it: consummate and eternal Blessedness. But now, What are the Services which this Blessedness is the Reward of? Such as no way answer the Compleatness of that: for they are unprofitable; nay, they are imperfect ones, mix'd with a great deal of Frowardness and Aversion; often interrupted by Acts of Disobedience. When such Services as these are rewarded with Celestial Blessedness, Grace is certainly in its Glory, the Freeness of divine Love is wonderfully display'd, and God does as it were say to the Soul, Not for the sake of
your

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your poor Performance do I thus advance you ; no ! but for mine own Name's sake, for the sake of my Love which I bear towards you, and for the Glory of my own Grace and Goodness.

3. That Christ will thus reward such as are wise and faithful Servants, is a great Encouragement to be always abounding in the Work of the Lord. Hereby the Believer may be fully satisfied, that his Labour will not be in vain. If it were like to be so, that would greatly discourage us, and Service would then be thought a hard and a severe Task. There is a Principle of Self-love in our very Nature, which makes us desire to see the Fruit of our Labours. So that to have Work without Wages, is apt to tire, and make us weary of it. Besides, the Service of Christ has many and great Difficulties attending it : to corrupt Nature, at least, 'tis so ; so that *the righteous are but scarcely sav'd*. That we may not therefore be discourag'd by all this, our Master will thus reward the wise and the faithful Servant. He loves a cheerful Obedience, to see us do it from the Soul, when we are *fervent in Spirit serving the Lord*, Rom. 12. 11. And that such a Frame might be kept up, he assures us, that we shall not labour in vain, and spend our Strength for nought, when we lay it out for him.

4. It is necessary for the Glory of Christ, that none but faithful and wise Servants should

should be thus rewarded. That he mayn't be thought a Lover of Sin, and to encourage Persons in their idle Neglects of the Duty they owe to him. How many more Affronts would ungodly Men offer him even than now they do, did they know they could do it Scot-free, nay that it should be as well with 'em at last as with the most Faithful. Such a Temper as this must be utterly discourag'd; it can't become a wise and a holy Governour to give Countenance to it. And therefore will Christ make a Distinction between the Righteous and the Wicked at the Last-day: therefore will he separate the Sheep from the Goats in another World. Therefore, I say, will he make the wise Servant a blessed Person, a *Ruler over all his House*; but for the evil and the slothful one, he will *cut him asunder and appoint him his Portion with the Hypocrites, where shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.*

A P P L I C A T I O N.

I infer,

I. That there is one way of dying and going out of this World which is so far from being terrible, that 'tis very desirable, and that which a wise Person would wish for. I own that Death, in its own Nature, is the *ultimum Terribilium*, the last of Terribles in this World, and that 'tis the King of Terrors: As 'tis the greatest Blow to the Nature of Man, and that which dissolves the Constitution; so that we are no more perfect Men till Death it self shall

shall be destroy'd by the Resurrection. But if you consider the different ways of dying, I am sure there is one which ought not to fright us; for 'tis more desirable than Life, because it carries us to perfect and eternal Blessedness: I mean, in short, dying in the Service of Christ, being found in our Master's Business when he comes to call us out of this World. There are two ways of dying thus in the Service of Christ; when we are heartily disposed for any Acts of Service which he shall call us to: this implies a Principle of Grace in us; so that he who goes off in this Temper, undoubtedly goes safe to Heaven. The other is, when we die actually engaged in some particular part of Christ's Service; as, when we die Praying, or Hearing, either in the publick or private Worship of God. This seems to carry that in it which may render it more desirable still: if you consider the easie Speediness of it, the Soul being taken from the Body almost before they are aware of it; without any of those Pains, those Formalities of bidding adieu to surrounding Friends and Relations, and those Buffetings of Satan which others undergo, but passing immediately into Fulness of Joy. If you consider, I say, the Easiness of it; their Soul being carried off, as some of the Jews say that of *Moses* was, as it were by the Kiss of God: and especially if you consider, that dying in the Worship of Christ, they are most likely to die with Comfort and Satisfaction, that being the direct way wherein he is to be met

met with and enjoy'd. So that such a Soul only changes the degrees of his Enjoyment, and from conversing with Christ in a very sweet and delightful manner here, goes to do it a little more fully in another World.* This certainly must be a blessed and a comfortable way of dying, tho' it may be surprizing to such as are round about us. And therefore 'twas the serious Wish of an excellent Person † now with God; " May my House and Soul be in order, and then the sooner it quits this vile Body, if in the twinkling of an eye, so much the better. To which there is but one Circumstance more, which I should desire may be added, viz. that I may die Preaching the everlasting Gospel, or Administering the Lord's Supper. May my Taper be blown out in the Sanctuary, and may I presently pass in an Instant from serving the Church militant here on Earth, to join with the Church triumphant in Heaven.

† Mr. Nathan.
Taylor's Sermon
on the sudden
Death of Mr.
Nathan. Vincent.

2. Let such as have dear Relations taken away in the Service of God and Christ, be comforted under the Loss of 'em. Perhaps you have had Relation after Relation snatched away from you. Perhaps the nearest Relations have gone suddenly after one another. A few Weeks may have robb'd you of a tender Mother, an indulgent Father, and they perhaps may have gone unexpectedly away when you

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you had little or no Warning. Well! strive to dry up the Flood of Tears, for behold they are not dead, but sleep; sleeping in Jesus, in the Bosom of their Saviour, in a more blessed State than ever they were in, in this World. This is their Case if they dy'd serving the Lord Jesus, and then I am sure the Loss of surviving, is the Gain of departed, Relatives; and therefore should be but moderately lamented.

3. Let us endeavour to improve the Deaths of such as die in the State of wise and faithful Servants to the Lord Jesus Christ. Such Providences are very improvable, to encourage us to imitate them in their Zeal for Christ, and to engage us to strive that we may be found amongst their number. When such especially are taken away in a visible, publick, and surprizing manner, may we not learn how short our Time is, how uncertain the Hour when our Lord will come? May we not then think our Lord is now calling us to prepare to follow; or perhaps he is rebuking of us for our slighting the Ordinances of the Gospel, our Coldness under 'em, or our forsaking of 'em upon every slight Occasion. When such a publick Stroke is given in the midst of us, Is he not warning us against our Lukewarmness? Is he not reproving us for our unchristian Tempers and Conversations; all our Sins, as a Congregation or Society, either against God or against each other? O that we would sit down and reflect a little upon the Use we might and should endeavour

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to make of such Dispensations! That according to that of the Wise-man, *the living may lay it to heart*, and then 'twill be better for us to go to the *House of Mourning than to the House of Feasting*, Eccles. 7. 2.

4. Let us strive to imitate such wise and faithful Servants as I have been speaking of. O take care to be like 'em in their Zeal for their Lord! Take care to be like 'em in their Constancy and Perseverance in his Service! The last time this deceas'd Person came to the Worship of God here, he was observ'd to come with a more than usual Zeal and Forwardness. 'Tis the Temper of every true Servant, to be fervent in some measure; and this is a Temper which we should maintain and increase in to our last hours. In a word, Let us imitate them who through Faith and Patience, by the Faithfulness and Constancy of their Service to Christ, are now inheriting the Promises. Thus shall we come to be like them in their Death, even to die in the Lord, as they have done before us. We mayn't die in the same particular manner perhaps as they have done; but, we shall die the Death of the Righteous, and our last End will be like his. We shall have Peace in that last and deciding hour, which will be worth more than all this World: a Peace which passeth all Understanding, and a Happiness which the World can neither give nor take from us: For, *Blessed is that Servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

p. 11. l. 26. r. 1. low.

Page 20. line 4. read *even*. P. 27. l. 5. r. *there*. P. 30.
above the first Line, r. *APPLICATION*. P. 87.
l. r. r. *you twice*. P. 114. l. 13. r. *lead*. P. 117. l. 9. for
Kindness, r. *Kind*. P. 129. l. 32. for *to*, r. *into*. P. 140. l.
24. r. *Benefits*. P. 141. l. 4. r. *willing*. P. 151. l. 7. r.
seldom. P. 165. l. 1. r. *nor*. P. 216. l. 10. after *why*, r. *such*.

p. 133. l. 17. r. them.

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